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ABSTRACT

The Maltese islands consist of Malta, Gozo, and Comino and two tiny uninhabited islands, strategically located in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. This handbook contains a brief description of secondary education in Malta. Following the introduction, section 1 provides an overview of the mission of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Malta's constitutional and legal framework, the state system of education, the student population, educational administration, and landmarks in the development of secondary education. Section 2 discusses the following issues: policy formation and educational innovation, educational finance, the varying educational tracks, absenteeism, curriculum, postsecondary education, evaluation and assessment, support services, school staff, the school year, salaries, and the European influence. Section 3 reports on efficiency and performance of the secondary education system; and the student population, student intake, and graduates at the University of Malta. The fourth section describes challenges to Malta's educational system, which include lifelong learning, information technology, national development and educational change, resource allocation, teacher shortage, decentralization, examinations and certification, and schools as community centers. Nineteen tables are included. (Contains 22 references.) (LMI)

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Secondary education in Malta

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Secondary education in Malta

by Paul A. Attard in collaboration with Andrew J. Buhagiar

Guide to secondary education in Europe
Editor Denis Kallen

A secondary education for Europe
Council for Cultural Co-operation

Council of Europe Press, 1996

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The **Council of Europe** was founded in 1949 to achieve greater unity between European parliamentary democracies. It is the oldest of the European political institutions and has thirty-nine member states,[1] including the fifteen members of the European Union. It is the widest intergovernmental and interparliamentary grouping in Europe, and has its headquarters in the French city of Strasbourg.

Only questions related to national defence are excluded from the Council of Europe's work, and the Organisation has activities in the following areas: democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms; media and communication; social and economic affairs; education, culture, heritage and sport; youth, health, environment and regional planning; local democracy; and legal co-operation.

The **European Cultural Convention** was opened for signature in 1954. This international treaty is open to European countries that are not members of the Council of Europe, and it enables them to take part in the Organisation's programmes on education, culture, sport and youth. So far, forty-four states have acceded to the European Cultural Convention; the Council of Europe's full member states plus Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, the Holy See and Monaco.

The **Council for Cultural Co-operation** (the CDCC) is responsible for the Council of Europe's work on education and culture. Four specialised committees – the Education Committee, the Standing Conference on University Problems, the Culture Committee and the Cultural Heritage Committee – help the CDCC to carry out its tasks under the European Cultural Convention. There is also a close working relationship between the CDCC and the regular conferences of specialised European ministers responsible for education, culture and cultural heritage.

The CDCC's programmes are an integral part of the Council of Europe's work, and, like the programmes in other sectors, they contribute to the Organisation's three overarching policy objectives for the 1990s:

- the protection, reinforcement and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms and pluralist democracy;

- the promotion of an awareness of European identity;

1. Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

– the search for common responses to the great challenges facing European society.

The CDCC's education programme covers school, higher and adult education, as well as educational research. At present, there are projects on: education for democratic values; history; modern languages; school links and exchanges; the reform of secondary education; access to higher eduction; the reform of legislation on higher education in central and eastern Europe; academic mobility; and educational documentation and research.

In 1991, the Council for Cultural Co-operation of the Council of Europe launched a project entitled "A secondary education for Europe". The aims of the project are to:

– give young people the knowledge, skills and attitudes they will need to meet the major challenges of European society;

– prepare young people for higher education, and for mobility, work and daily life in a multilingual and multicultural, democratic Europe;

– make young people aware of their common cultural heritage and their shared responsibilities as Europeans.

This project has two elements: the first devoted to reflections and consultations among the member states on the overall policies and strategies, and the second on the European dimension in the school curriculum.

The series entitled "Guide to secondary education in Europe" sets out to present in a synthetic form – country by country – the major elements of secondary education structures and policies that exist in CDCC member states.

Each guide has been written, on the basis of a common analysis, by experts designated by the authorities in each country concerned.

Denis Kallen has undertaken the difficult task of the general co-ordination of this series, guaranteeing its coherence and thus allowing comparisons to be made among countries.

Given that this is a field in which developments sometimes take place very quickly and are of an almost permanent nature, it is possible that, despite the considerable efforts made to take into account the latest reforms in the pipeline, certain changes may have taken place since the manuscript was originally received.

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Introduction

1. Malta: position and size

The Maltese islands consist of Malta, Gozo and Comino and two tiny uninhabited islands, strategically situated in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, 92 kilometres from the nearest point in Europe and 288 kilometres from the nearest point in North Africa. The land area of the Maltese islands is 316 square kilometres Malta covers 246 square kilometres and Gozo 67 square kilometres. The coastline of Malta is 137 kilometres long, while that of Gozo is 43 kilometres, both have a variety of bays and creeks but include stretches of cliffs.

2. History and culture

The strategic position of the Maltese islands has been acknowledged and generally exploited by foreign powers, among them prehistoric peoples who left behind unique temples, the Phoenicians, the Carthaginians, the Romans, the Arabs, the Knights of Malta who came from among the nobles of different west European countries, the French and the British, each leaving its particular and long-lasting imprint on the islands. Malta displays many contrasts, east meeting west, north mixing with the south, the old blending with the new, with a distinctly rich and varied historical and cultural background and development.

3. The people

The population of over 360 000 is southern European. It has been increasing steadily not only because of natural reasons (the 1990 crude birth-rate was 15 per 1 000 and the fertility rate, 2,2), but also because of returning migrants and a longer lifespan reflecting the socio-economic progress of the country. By the year 2000 it has been estimated that there will be a population of 375 600, at this time 60 000 people are expected to be over 60-years-old.

Population shift by age category:

Age-group	1990	2020
0–19	30.7%	26.0%
20–59	54.6%	50.7%
60+	14.7%	23.3%

Projected population growth by age-group:

Age-group	1990	2020	Change
0–19	109 493	106 400	– 2.8%
20–59	192 881	207 400	+ 7.0%
60+	59 536	95 000	+ 80.8%

Other indicative statistics about the Maltese islands as at March 1994:

Population		366 895
	Males	181 437
	Females	185 458
Labour supply		138 696
	Males	102 440
	Females	3 256
Gainfully occupied		132 515
	Males	97 090
	Females	35 425
Registered unemployed		6 181
	Females	831
	% of labour supply	4.5%

4. Resources and labour

The Maltese islands have very few natural resources except for manpower, sun and sea, and mild weather throughout the year. The Maltese have had to become skilful, adaptable and industrious to overcome very difficult times and to survive economic recessions. Today, the strong economy is primarily

based on industry, tourism, servicing, transshipment, financial institutions and agriculture. Industry requiring high technology is intended to supplement the existing heavy industry, primarily ship building and ship repairing. Malta is developing the hub concept in various economic directions and in this context it has continued to strengthen efficient air and sea communications with the rest of the world.

The islands' infrastructure has improved enormously during recent years, especially with regard to water, electricity and telecommunications. Due regard was paid to environment protection because of its bearing on the standard of living.

5. Government

In 1964, Malta became an independent and sovereign state. It is a member of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Commonwealth of Nations, the Non-Aligned Group, has a special interest in Mediterranean affairs and is aspiring to become a member of the European Union in the near future.

Malta has had a republican constitution since 1974. The House of Representatives is made up of sixty-five members elected on a proportional representation system. The President enjoys limited executive powers. The Prime Minister leads a Cabinet of Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries who wield executive powers.

There are two major political parties, the Partit Nazzjonalista (Christian-Democrats) and the Malta Labour Party, and a very small Alternattiva Demokratika (environmental party). Around 95% of the citizens eligible to vote participate in political elections. The local councils, established in 1993, aim to enrich democracy and to give the people more say in the management of local affairs in an ongoing decentralisation process. Malta enjoys complete political and labour stability. The judiciary is completely independent of political or administrative powers.

I. General section

Human resources are the basis of the Maltese economy and their development through education has been the main aim of successive governments, especially since the end of the second world war. As the strategic military value of the Maltese islands started diminishing gradually in the late 1950s and more rapidly in the mid-1960s, the working population could no longer rely on the availability of job opportunities with the British Services. Hence, the education and training of young people for the world of work had to become a part of the educational process. Because of poor work opportunities, the Maltese emigrated in their thousands in the 1950s and 1960s. Now, as a result of a period of economic and social growth, migrants are returning home in significant numbers.

1. The mission of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources

It is significant that the Ministry of Education is also responsible for human resource development. The overall mission of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources is to oversee and plan an ongoing process of reform and development of the Maltese education system, aimed ultimately at seeking to prepare students for life, including their working life.

Through the Education Division, the Department of Labour, and the Employment and Training Corporation, the ministry also strives to promote the development of the country's human resources in line with the government's overall economic and social objectives.

The ministry's other responsibilities include the guardianship and preservation of the historical heritage of Malta and Gozo, and the dissemination of knowledge thereof through the Departments of Museums, and of Libraries and Archives.

2. Responsibilities of the Education Division

The Education Division is responsible, as provided for in the Education Act of 1988, for the provision of an efficient and effective system of schools, which, whilst ensuring education and training in areas relevant to the needs of Maltese society, affords the individual, without any discrimination on the basis of

age, sex, belief or economic means, the opportunity to develop their full cognitive, affective and operative potential. This mission is in fulfilment of a moral obligation on the part of society, and a necessary investment in the continued development of the nation.

3. Constitutional and legal framework

The Constitution of the Republic of Malta and the Education Act (Act XXIV of 1988) provide the constitutional and legal framework, and the main aims and objectives of the Maltese education system.

Under the section entitled "Declaration of Principles", the state aims at:

- providing compulsory primary education, free of charge, for all in state schools;

- providing scholarships and financial assistance to ensure the right of the individual to attain the highest level of educational achievement;

- developing cultural, scientific and technological research;

- developing professional and vocational training.

The Constitution establishes the right of disabled and handicapped persons to education. It recognises Maltese as the national language, and Maltese and English as the two official languages of the state. It ensures the teaching of the Roman Catholic faith in all state schools, but guarantees the individual's freedom of conscience.

The Education Act of 1988 states that:

It is the duty of the state:

- to promote education and instruction;

- to ensure the existence of a system of schools and institutions accessible to all Maltese citizens for the full development of the whole personality including the ability of every person to work;

- to provide for such schools and institutions where these do not exist.

It shall be the duty of every parent of a minor to cause him:

- to be registered in a school for the first scholastic year, beginning when he is of compulsory school age;

- to continue to attend school up to the end of the scholastic year during which the minor ceases to be of compulsory school age, or up to the end of such further period as the minister may prescribe by regulations;

– to attend school regularly on each scholastic day, unless the minor has a good and sufficient cause to be absent from school.

It is the right of every parent of a minor to give their opinion on any matter concerning the education that the minor is to receive.

It shall be the right of the state:

– to establish a national minimum curriculum of studies for all schools;

– to establish the national minimum conditions for all schools;

– to secure compliance with the national minimum curriculum of studies and the national minimum conditions for all schools.

The law enunciates the conditions for the establishment of private schools and the powers and constraints imposed on the minister in issuing the relevant licence.

The 1988 Education Act recognised for the first time teaching as a profession and states that no person may exercise the profession of a teacher in a school and receive remuneration without a warrant from the minister. A teacher may be entitled to a permanent or a temporary warrant according to their qualifications and the parameters within which a temporary or permanent warrant is issued are then enunciated.

The state – the act states – has to provide for the primary education of the children of compulsory school age and special schools for children having special educational needs. The state may provide schools for infants who are under compulsory school age. The state has a duty to provide for the secondary education of all children who have completed their primary education.

The act states that it shall be the duty of the state, having provided for the education of Maltese citizens, to enable them to form their own independent judgment. The state must establish such educational facilities that it may deem necessary to provide those citizens with the opportunity of qualifying in trades, skills, artisan, technical or commercial activities, and in the professions, in order to prepare, instruct and instill discipline in those citizens for work in the community.

The act established school councils to administer the funds and all other assets of the school, although the head of school and the teaching staff remain responsible for matters of curriculum and of discipline.

The act establishes a Council for Education with the Rector of the University as its President and a representative of each school administered by a school

council and other members appointed by the minister. The council is meant to advise the minister on any matter connected with education and upon such matters referred to it by the minister, to prepare plans for the development of education and for the better integration of educational services and to advise the minister on any proposed amendments to the provisions or on the repeal of the Education Act of 1988.

The act deals in detail with the University of Malta, establishes the role of the Registrar of Examinations, and the Scholastic Tribunal. The act also safeguards the educational rights of minors.

4. Educational provision

In Malta, the state provides a complete system of education, from pre-school through to further and adult education. Education is also provided by a very healthy private – mainly Catholic Church – sector, from nursery to post-secondary, and by a wide range of private adult educational institutions. The University of Malta is autonomous, but supported almost entirely by public funds.

The state provides a kindergarten education for all children who are at least 3-years-old. Although attendance at kindergarten centres is voluntary, it is estimated that over 90% of the children aged 3, and 95% of the children aged 4 attend either state or private nurseries and kindergartens. Compulsory school commences at the age of 5 when all children start attending primary schools. Primary education lasts six years, broken down into two phases of three years each.

The first five years of schooling following primary education are considered as secondary education for students aged 11 to 16. The secondary education course generally leads to the Secondary Education Certificate Examination – Ordinary Level, in a range of subjects.

A very rich variety of courses, including a number of subjects generally leading to the Advanced Level Certificate, the Intermediate Certificate or another foreign or local certificate are offered to students aged 16 and over at post-secondary educational institutions.

One must note that the Catholic Church in Malta has traditionally played an important part in education, providing educational institutions of a high standard. While in the past members of religious orders were deeply involved with the actual teaching of students, today lay people form the backbone of

teaching staff in all Church schools as a result of dwindling religious vocations. Another fairly recent innovation is the setting up of non-profit making foundations for the establishment of educational institutions (figures given below).

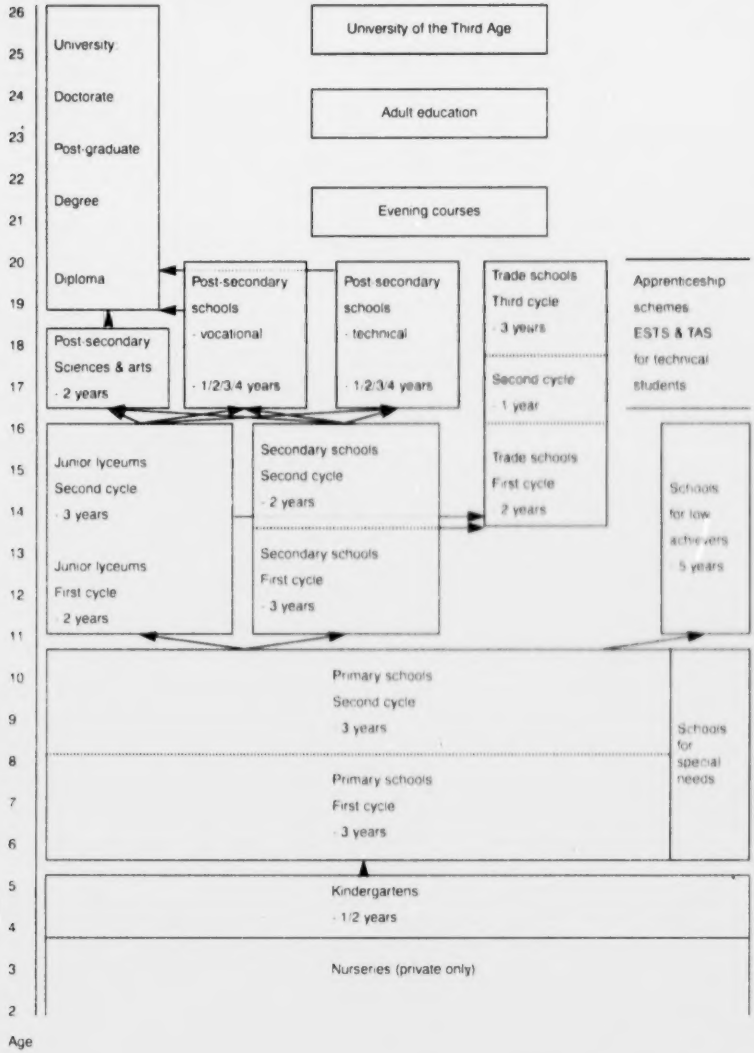
Church schools are heavily subsidised by the state. As a consequence, attendance in these schools is free of charge, and to some extent, a greater number of students have a choice of either a state or Church school. In order to attend a Church secondary school, the pupil has to qualify in a competitive examination.

Private non-Church schools are still fee-paying. Admission criteria vary from one school to another.

5. An overview of the state system of education

Age		
	Nurseries (private only)	
3-5	**Pre-primary kindergarten**	
5-11	**Primary education (six years)**	
		First cycle, three years Second cycle, three years
11-16	**Secondary education (five years)**	
	Secondary schools	First cycle, two years Second cycle, three years
	Trade schools	After three years in a secondary school of a junior lyceum
		First cycle, two years Second cycle, one year (post-secondary) Third cycle, three years (note: trade schools are being reformed)
16+	**Post-secondary education** Academic (arts and sciences) Technical Vocational	

6. The state system of education



Note The size of the boxes does not represent the number of students in the sector/at the level

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7. Student population

State schools 1994/95
Private Schools 1993/94

	Total	%	Public	%	Private	%
Kindergarten	10 636	100	6 200	58	4 436	42
– of which						
3-year-olds			2 600			
4-year-olds			3 600			
Primary	35 342	100	23 847	67	11 495	39
– of which						
males			12 436		5 978	
females			11 411		5 517	
Secondary	30 986	100	23 183	75	7 803	25
– of which						
males			11 887[1]		4 674	
females			11 296[1]		3 129	
– of which trade schools	3 684	100	3 684		0	
Post-secondary	5 446	100	4 765	87	681	13
– of which						
males			1 847		391	
females			2 918		290	

Secondary and post-secondary schools	36 432[2]	100%
State secondary and post-secondary schools	27 948[2]	77%
Private secondary and post-secondary schools	8 484	23%
Total population	82 410	100%
Total state schools	57 995	70%
Total private schools	24 415	30%
University student population	6 000	
Total student population	88 410	

1. Figures include students still in trade schools but over 16 years of age.
2. Please note slight changes in figures.

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8. The administration of education

Minister of Education and Human Resources
Permanent Secretary

Director General, Education
Director, Corporate Planning and Development
- Assistant Director, Research and Planning
- Assistant Director, Deployment, Training and Staff Development
- Assistant Director, Non-State Schools

Director, Curriculum Development and Implementation
- Assistant Director, Curriculum Development
- Assistant Director, Curriculum Implementation
- Assistant Director, Information Technology Education

Director, Student Services and International Relations
- Assistant Director, Student Services and Special Education
- Assistant Director, Communications and International Relations

Director, Operations
- Assistant Director, Area One
- Assistant Director, Area Two
- Assistant Director, Area Three
- Assistant Director, Area Four

Director, Further Studies and Adult Education
- Assistant Director, Further Studies
- Assistant Director, Technical Studies
- Assistant Director, Adult Education

Director, Finance and Administration
- Assistant Director, Human Resources
  (Personnel Section, Records Section, Leave Section, clerks, minor staff)
- Assistant Director, Financial Services
  (Accounts Section, Salaries Section)
- Assistant Director, Procurement and Administration
  (procurement, customer services)
- Director, Maintenance
- Director, Capital Works
- Transport

The Director General, Education, is the chief executive of the Education Division. The first five directors mentioned above are professional/administrative grades and they manage a number of education officers (prior to 1974 they were called inspectors). They are allocated a secretariat and clerical support. The sixth director mentioned above heads the Administrative Department (General Civil Service side of the Education Division) and is responsible for all

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personnel matters at both system and educational institution levels. It must be observed here that the above administrative structure is still in the process of development as part of a major structural review of the Education Division, which is continuing at the time of writing.

Previously, education formed one department with a Director as its head and an Assistant Director, Primary Education, an Assistant Director, Secondary Education, an Assistant Director, Post-Primary and Adult Education, and an Assistant Director, Educational Support Services. There was no Assistant Director, Finance and Administration. The creation of different departments with a director being responsible for each department is part of the ongoing decentralisation process of the Maltese system of education designed to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

Since Malta has a total population of 360 000 living within a small land area it does not demand a sophisticated system of regional and local administration in education. However, at the time of writing it is being seriously considered that the Director of Operations, soon to start functioning fully, will be responsible for the proper functioning of all state educational institutions and they will co-ordinate four assistant directors, each of whom will be responsible for a particular area/region encompassing schools at all levels of education, from kindergarten to secondary (age 3 to 16). Post-secondary educational institutions for students aged 16 or over will be catered for by the appropriate director.

9. The centralised system

The state education system in Malta is centralised and the educational institutions depend largely on the central authority for the following provisions:

- staff recruitment, employment, deployment, development and discipline;

- curriculum design, development and implementation;

- determination of catchment areas for secondary schools;

- wide range of student and teacher support services;

- assessment procedures and the preparation and setting of annual examinations from year 3 primary till the end of secondary education (16);

- planning and financing of capital and recurrent expenditure (a degree of decentralisation is taking place);

- procurement and supply of a proportion of material resources (decentralisation measures in the provision of materials and supplies was implemented in this area as from 1995);

– repair, maintenance and servicing of buildings and equipment (decentralisation is being encouraged selectively).

10. Landmarks in the development of secondary education

In 1929, compulsory school attendance was enforced by law but this law did not oblige parents to start sending their children to school. In 1946, schooling became compulsory for all children between 6 and 14 years of age. This provision created an enormous school accommodation problem and for several years children attended school on a part-time basis.

Prior to 1970, state primary schools provided an eight-year course for compulsory school age pupils between 6 and 14 years of age, but pupils could prolong their stay in primary school by another two years. At the age of 11, that is after six years of primary education, pupils would sit for a highly competitive and selective examination to seek admission into a lyceum or a secondary technical school. Those who failed at the age of 11 could re-sit their examination at the end of each scholastic year until they became 14-years-old; 14-year-olds would then be able to sit for the Technical Institute Admission Examination.

1970: The state carried out a major reform when it introduced a universal five-year secondary education course. Previously, pupils had to sit for a highly competitive admission examination to qualify for secondary education. Otherwise, they would continue their education in a primary school until the age of 14. Now, after sitting for a selective/qualifying examination, all students proceeded either to the already established lyceums and secondary technical schools catering for higher achievers or to area secondary schools, according to the results obtained. This provision of universal secondary education created an enormous strain on the state education system in that schools that had formerly housed primary pupils had to be adapted for secondary education. The teachers required to teach the various subjects in secondary schools had to be recruited from among primary school teachers, sometimes without the required qualifications to teach specific subjects.

1972: Entry tests and examinations for admission into state secondary schools were abolished and differentiation between different types of secondary schools was removed while the secondary school system was reorganised on an area basis. The curriculum was reformed. A "comprehensive" programme in common core subjects was offered during the first two years. As from form 3, students could choose one out of five possible "options" or go into greater depth in core subjects. National examinations were abolished and were replaced by school-based examinations.

At the age of 14, students could transfer to a trade school or to a technical institute. Trade schools for (lower) craft level students were introduced, providing three-year full-time courses. At this time, sixth forms, until then run by the government, and the Junior College, hitherto administered by the University of Malta, were amalgamated into upper secondary school.

1974: A new education act extended compulsory education from 14 to 16. This resulted in a dramatic increase in the student population in secondary schools and a great strain on the human and material resources, buildings and spaces. The act provided for heads of department, counsellors, guidance teachers, form teachers and teacher librarians in secondary schools. School management committees were set up in some schools on an experimental basis. End-of-year examinations were reintroduced after the experiment to rely wholly on continuous assessment had failed. Admission examinations for secondary schools were also reintroduced.

1975: Formal annual examinations on a national scale involved the setting of one paper for all students taking the same subject in the same form. A scheme for fourth-year male students who had distinguished themselves in a trade school course in certain crafts provided for an allowance and the promise of a job. Students in upper secondary school could take any three subjects on the curriculum at General Certificate of Education, Advanced Level, which was set by British examination boards, or the Malta University Matriculation Board.

1978: Annual examinations on a national level in trade subjects were introduced. Entry into craft courses in trade schools and technical institutes were to be based on standardised results obtained by applicants in the secondary school annual examinations in English, Maltese and mathematics.

1979: Students starting form 3, secondary schools, were divided into two ability/attainment groups: *a*. motivated students intending to continue their academic studies, and *b*. unmotivated students.

Motivated and unmotivated students were identified both through their examination results and the assessment made by their teacher.

Trade school courses for boys were extended from three to four years. Government departments, semi-private industry and private industry employed third year students for a further work/training period of three years in an apprenticeship scheme. Passes in Maltese, English, mathematics, physics and Arabic at Ordinary Level, or matriculation, became compulsory for entry into the upper secondary school. A rigid pupil-worker scheme was introduced in upper secondary schools, which were renamed new lyceums. This scheme offered students study for five months and work for five months annually

during a three-year course instead of the previous two years. But the course was afterwards shortened again to two years. The course was intended to provide a framework of suitably qualified workers from whom employers would be able to nominate worker-students for university courses; to provide qualified students with the opportunity for studies at Advanced Level independently of the family's economic background; and to raise the general level of education of the working class. The work period, however, seemed to restrict the time students needed for study. Entry into the new lyceum was restricted to students qualified in six Ordinary Level subjects (five of which were compulsory).

1980: The Extended Skill Training Scheme was introduced for trade school students, consisting of six months training and six months work as part of a three-year apprenticeship.

1981: Junior lyceums – highly selective secondary schools similar to the lyceums of the 1950s and 1960s – were established to provide accelerated education for students with high intellectual and academic abilities and attainment. This was done partly to try to stem the steady flow of high achievers from state schools to private schools, especially at the secondary level.

1983: Special classes for slow learning students in the 11 to 16 age-bracket were opened.

1984: Preparatory secondary schools were created for low achievers who were not mature enough to proceed to secondary education, while vocationally oriented courses were offered in junior craft centres for boys (similar schools for girls were opened in 1986) who did not attain the educational standard enabling them to be admitted into a trade school after two years in a secondary school. A higher secondary school was established to cater for students who, after five years of secondary education, did not possess all the necessary qualifications to join the new lyceums (sixth forms).

1985: Opportunity centres were opened for pupils of secondary school age who were very low achievers and could not follow profitably the curriculum in the normal secondary schools.

1987: In an effort to streamline secondary education and to minimise the fragmentation within the secondary sector, junior craft centres and trade schools were amalgamated. The curriculum in these schools was revised to increase the general education component to 50% of schooling time and to allocate the remaining 50% to trade theory and practice at year 1 level (post-form 2, secondary school education). Academic curricula in trade schools became more varied and resembled those obtainable in secondary schools. Arabic no longer remained a compulsory subject of study in secondary schools

as it had been since the 1970s. The Pupil-Worker Scheme was radically reformed to include a study phase equivalent to a normal scholastic year and voluntary work opportunities were offered during the summer holidays. A new, examinable "Systems of knowledge" course was to replace the extension studies course in the new lyceum curriculum. This course is meant to broaden the educational base of students who intended to specialise either in arts, sciences or commerce subjects and to correct the early specialisation inherent in the requirement of three Advanced Level subjects in order to qualify for admission to university.

1988: The new education act defines the duties of the state and parents in education, establishes the relations between the state and the private sector in education, makes the administration of education more participative, introduces school councils, and the National Minimum Curricula, extends the period of compulsory education by one year (namely, by making pupils begin at 5 years of age instead of 6) refunds the university and establishes teaching as a profession.

Preparatory secondary schools (which had been catering for pupils that had finished their primary education but were not ready for secondary education) were closed. The admission examination into junior lyceums was to include social studies and religion besides Maltese, English and mathematics. All types of state secondary schools were regrouped within one sector although they retained their identity. The *numerus clausus* was removed for entry to university with the resultant large influx of students joining the lyceum (sixth form) and the university. There was a significant expansion in the number of courses offered to students at the age of 16, together with an impressive participation rate.

1989: Admission to junior lyceums became qualifying rather than selective or competitive and, as a result, the number of students in these schools rose significantly. As a result, junior lyceums started catering for a wider range of student abilities and not simply for the very high achievers.

1990: This year saw a dramatic increase in the number of students joining 16+ courses and the courses provided a wider range of studies. The Pupil-Worker Scheme (PWS) continued to provide a training scheme for post-secondary students in the academic field. The Technician Apprenticeship Scheme (TAS) was introduced to motivate students to follow advanced technician courses over a period of four years, combining academic studies with monitored work experience and providing financial support to students. The TAS brought about the restructuring of various courses to include industrial experience. The Extended Skills Training Scheme (ESTS), combining formal academic training with work experience, introduced in the 1970s for trade

schools graduates, was further developed in order to prepare better qualified craftsmen. The newly published National Minimum Curricula led to a review of existing syllabuses and learning materials.

1991: The state secondary education sector became responsible for all junior lyceums, secondary schools, trade schools and schools for low achievers. A staff development evening course for instructors in trade schools and secondary schools led to a Certificate in Education. The Education Division no longer automatically recruited student-workers sponsored by the division itself to follow a university course leading to a Bachelor of Education (Honours). Henceforth, teachers were to be recruited through a selective interview from among graduates possessing a B.Ed. (Hons.) degree, or a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), or a master's degree or a doctorate. Graduates in possession of a first degree, other than in education, became eligible for appointment on condition that they successfully complete a course in pedagogy. The Adult Education Unit, originally set up to make good the deficiencies of initial education, became an essential component of a more comprehensive educational set-up with lifelong and continuing education orientations.

1992: It was decided to "verticalise" all the secondary schools, that is, schools that had previously been catering for forms 1 and 2 only were to extend their courses gradually to cover forms 1 to 5, the complete secondary education course. The Education Division in conjunction with the University of Malta worked on a plan to set up the necessary structures and programmes of studies to establish national certification at the end of secondary education on a larger and more comprehensive scale than hitherto, covering practically all subjects studied in secondary schools. The Secondary Education Certificate Examination (equivalent to Ordinary Level) and the Matriculation (equivalent to Advanced Level) were established so that the system would no longer depend on foreign examinations and the examinations would reflect more accurately the local educational and cultural context in conformity with the National Minimum Curricula. A new grade of education assistant was introduced in the Education Division in order to provide support to education officers in their attempts to strengthen the teachers' advisory service in promoting the curriculum and to improve administrative efficiency and client satisfaction in the various educational sectors. A year-long in-service course in pedagogy and education was held in order to regularise the position of part-time teaching staff. A commission was set up by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources to report on post-secondary education and pre-university institutions in connection with planned changes from a British-based to a more European-based university admission examination; broadly

based on the baccalaureate model but where the content and structure are adapted to local needs.

1993: Work started on the design and development of a curriculum for trade schools aimed at providing a broader form of vocational education and putting an end to the current practice of introducing skill training in a specific craft at too early an age. The new curriculum is to become operational as from September 1995.

1994: In order to give students a more solid educational basis, admission into trade schools has been delayed by one year, that is students have to finish form 3 in an area secondary school or a junior lyceum before being admitted to a trade schools. Computer education is introduced in all secondary schools, with "information technology applications" in form 2 and "computer awareness" in form 5.

II. Issues section

1. The process of policy-making and innovation

The Ministry of Education and Human Resources is mainly responsible for policy-making and decision-taking in the administration and management of state education, and to a certain extent of private schools, in Malta. The ministry itself is composed of the Education Division and a number of other departments, namely libraries and archives, labour, employment and training, and co-operative systems. A parliamentary secretary, a political post just below that of minister, is responsible for the latter three departments under the overall responsibility of the minister.

Policy is developed at various management levels of education, with a major responsibility resting with the top management within the Education Division at system level in continuous consultation with the ministry. The minister meets regularly with the directors responsible for the different areas of management of education to discuss policies, plans of action and initiatives, and to review progress. The Director General, the Chief Executive of the Education Division, in turn holds regular meetings with the top officials of the departments making up the division. Since Malta is a small island, distances are no barrier to frequent communication in person; in fact, frequent informal encounters are as important as the more formal but less frequent meetings.

The 1988 Education Act provides for the setting up of a Council for Education composed of the Rector of the University as President, a representative of each school administered by a school council and other members appointed by the minister and who, in the opinion of the minister, are representative of the general public. The act expects the council to advise the minister on any matter connected with education as it may deem appropriate and upon any such matter referred to it by the minister, to prepare plans for the development of education and for the better integration of educational services and to submit those plans to the minister for his approval and for implementation by him, and to advise the minister on any proposed amendments to the provisions of the 1988 Education Act or any proposed law repealing this act. The

act provides also that the minister, before proposing to the House of Representatives any amendments to the provisions of this act or before proposing its repeal, shall refer any bill proposing such amendments or repeal to the Council for Education, which shall give its advice in writing and in public within the term laid down by the minister for that purpose.

Fruitful contributions in the development of education are made by a number of *ad hoc* committees that are given specific tasks to carry out within an established time-limit. They usually bring together individuals with particular expertise in the theory and practice of education that is relevant to the issue being discussed.

At the time of writing, a Consultative Committee for Education composed of a number of educational administrators and university lecturers in education has been asked to review and evaluate educational policies, to identify and prioritise those educational issues that most need to be addressed, to recommend remedial action, to point the direction that further development and reform of the education system should aim at, and to recommend on what type of structures are needed to monitor the agreed planned programmes of development and reform.

The Malta Union of Teachers, established in 1919, is a trade union deeply and actively concerned with professional and educational issues. It has made valid contributions towards the development of education on the island. Over the years, it has prepared papers and reports on educational issues and reforms and participated directly in discussions both as a body or through its representatives in educational developments. Agreements between the government and the Malta Union of Teachers on salaries and conditions of work have always brought about improvements in the administrative structures and provisions at both system and institution levels. Other smaller teachers' unions and associations have contributed towards the development of education in Malta.

One cannot ignore the significant contributions made through the local press by laymen and specialists and the influence that pressure groups of all kinds, including non-governmental organisations, make on the development of education in Malta. Education is a subject of lively and generally informed debate to which several pages in Malta's daily and Sunday papers are devoted. Similar coverage is accorded on the island's radio and television stations. Private schools, individually and through their own associations, are not only active in protecting, promoting and developing their own identity, character and independence, but they make themselves heard on national educational issues when the occasion arises.

2. Financing and budgeting

The state finances its schools but it also contributes towards the financing of most non-state schools, mainly Catholic Church schools. Officials in the Min-.stry of Education and Human Resources prepare the estimates of revenue and expenditure for the various sectors and sections, and for other ministry commitments in preparation for the presentation of the annual budget. Capital and recurrent expenditures are included. The estimates are then presented to, and discussed with, the Ministry of Finance, which eventually allocates the funds within the parameters of the national budget. The national budget is presented to, discussed and approved by parliament in November/ December for the following year.

The national budget for 1995 estimated the following revenue and expenditure:

Total revenue	Lm 522 900 000
Total recurrent expenditure	Lm 407 300 000
Total capital expenditure	Lm 114 700 000

The Ministry of Education and Human Resources includes the Education Division, the Department of Libraries and Archives, the Department of Labour, and the Museums Department. The total estimated revenue and expenditure of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources for 1994 were:

Revenue

Education	Lm 240 000
Libraries and archives	Lm 13 000
Museums	Lm 1 000 000
Labour	Lm 1 000
Total revenue	Lm 1 254 000

Recurrent expenditure

Ministry	Lm 13 544 000
Education	Lm 37 199 000
Libraries and archives	Lm 496 000
Museums	Lm 958 000
Labour	Lm 857 000
Total recurrent expenditure	Lm 53 054 000

Capital expenditure

Ministry	Lm 2 545 000
Education	Lm 1 745 000
Libraries and archives	Lm 500 000
Museums	Lm 180 000
Labour	Lm 670 000
Total capital expenditure	Lm 5 640 000

Expenditure on education as a percentage of the total national budget:

1986	7.1%	1987	6.2%
1988	7.0%	1989	6.3%
1990	6.2%	1991	6.7%
1992	8.1%	1993	11.5%[1]
1994	11.2%[1]	1995	10.6%[1]

1 Estimate

In a small economy like Malta's, the above percentages are indicative, to a limited extent, of the importance attached by each government to education. This is because major projects (or a lack of them) in other areas can have a significant effect on the size of the national budget and, consequently, the percentage of expenditure on education.

One has to bear in mind, also, which divisions or departments the Ministry of Education covers besides education. For example, should libraries, culture, sport and museums be taken into consideration when summing up expenditure on national education? Again, the addition (or leaving out) of any or all these areas to the expenditure on education affects (significantly) the percentage of expenditure on education. This explains why I was not so keen on providing this percentage.

The estimated revenue and expenditure of the Education Division, which forms part of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, were:

Estimated revenue	Lm 240 000
Estimated expenditure	
Personal emoluments	Lm 27 251 000
Operational and maintenance expenses	Lm 3 272 000
Programmes and initiatives	Lm 6 667 000

Special expenditure	Lm	9 000
Total expenditure	Lm	37 199 000

Personal emoluments include: staff salaries and wages, bonuses, income supplements, social security contributions, allowances and overtime.

Operational and maintenance expenses include, among other things, utilities, materials and supplies, repair and upkeep, rent, international memberships, office services, transport, travel, information services, contractual services, professional services, training, hospitality and incidental expenses.

Programmes and initiatives include, among other things, prize books, scholarships and bursaries, free milk to school children, school for foreign students, contributions towards the financing of Church schools, allowances to students under different schemes, adult education and guidance and counselling services.

Breakdown of the revenue of the Education Division

Fees of Office

External examination fees	Lm	15 000
Local examination fees	Lm	8 400
Fees payable by students	Lm	80 000
Miscellaneous fees	Lm	600

Reimbursements

Refund of the cost of books lost by students	Lm	2 500
Sale of books	Lm	6 000
Receipts from foreign students	Lm	100 000
Miscellaneous reimbursements	Lm	10 500

As the breakdown shows, in a small economy even small sums of money become significant.

Education Division revenue is very limited, while the expenditure is enormous by comparison. Education is a "social service", which has to be financed from other sources of national income, for example, value added tax and income tax.

The 1988 Education Act confirms that all teaching in state schools and the university shall be given to Maltese citizens without any fee being charged. Pupils aged between 3 and 16 in state kindergartens, primary and secondary schools are lent their textbooks for the scholastic year, enjoy free transportation and free milk daily, and free medical services, besides other benefits. They do not pay for the use of any apparata or materials they use during

school hours. Pupils in the primary schools receive some free stationery as well. Most students in post-secondary educational institutions receive an allowance if they follow certain courses. In 1994, 1 350 000 Maltese pounds were provided for allowances in the Pupil-Worker Scheme, while 310 000 were allocated for the allowances in the Technician Apprenticeship Scheme. In addition, 22 000 Maltese pounds were earmarked for other student schemes. Students from Gozo, the sister island of Malta, receive an allowance when following courses in Malta that are not available in Gozo.

Every year, state schools are given imprest funds in order to be able to purchase supplies and materials of their choice. The size of the allocation depends on the type and level of the school, the number of students it caters for and the funds available at national level. Another annual sum of money is allocated for minor emergency repairs that have to be carried out by the school itself. Major repairs, maintenance, construction and extension work in state schools are carried out at the expense of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources.

As a measure to decentralise the educational system, all state schools are administered by a school council. The school council administers the funds and assets of the school, except imprest allocated to urgent repairs and imprest provided for the purchase of materials and supplies. The council can use funds allocated to it by the Education Division and other funds that the council may acquire from other sources or through fund-raising activities it organises. The council is expected to plan the needs of the school and ways and means by which the council itself, without any outside help, may improve its funds and assets. By using the available funds, the council may embark on minor repairs to the school assets, supply the school with equipment, improve the physical and natural environment of the school, and enlarge the school library. The council may not embark on projects that change the physical layout of the school.

All receipts and accounts of income, expenditure and council funds are kept by the secretary/treasurer, who is also the head of school. These records may be audited by Education Division officials. The Financial Rules for School Councils regarding the Administration of School Funds and Assets set by the Ministry of Education regulate in detail the responsibilities of school councils in this area of school administration. These regulations fall within the 1966 Financial Regulations binding all government ministries. The head of school is expected to keep and submit separate records of school funds on a quarterly basis that do not pertain to the school council on a quarterly basis.

The funds raised by school councils, so far, have been very limited and practically never exceed a few hundred Maltese pounds. Funds are raised through

(small) donations, fund raising activities, the sale of objects produced by students, and the making available of school facilities. This last source of income may become more popular. Each school keeps its own records.

In order to facilitate the parent's choice of school for their children, through agreements of subvention of non-state, non-profit-making schools, in accordance with the availability of state funds, the state provides gradually for the same gratuity of teaching in such schools as is afforded to students in state schools. In 1994, Lm 4 350 000 were earmarked for the financing of (Catholic) Church schools, which are administered, owned and maintained by Church institutions and orders. The state contribution generally goes towards the financing of the salaries of school staff. Students in the schools subsidised by the state do not pay any fees; however, they pay for their own textbooks and transport, and they are not provided with free milk.

3. The secondary education system

After completing kindergarten and six years of primary education at the age of 11, all students start attending a five-year secondary education course. About 70% of the age cohort attend state schools which are open to all, while the other 30% frequent private schools.

4. Junior lyceums and secondary schools

At the end of their primary education course, most state school pupils sit for the junior lyceum admission examination. Junior lyceums cater for the more able students. This examination is not competitive but qualifying and pupils from both state and private primary schools can sit for it. About 75% of state primary school pupils sit for the junior lyceum admission examination. The examination covers five main areas of study: Maltese, English, mathematics, social studies and religious knowledge (but pupils can opt out of this subject on grounds of conscience). Pupils must obtain at least a grade "C" in all five subjects to qualify for admission to junior lyceums.

Those who do not sit for, or do not qualify, are admitted to secondary schools. Therefore, the state provides secondary education in either a lyceum or a secondary school during the first three years and, in three types of school, including trade schools, during the last two years of secondary education to cater for a variety of attainment levels and aptitudes. A very small percentage – of the order of 6% to 7% – of very low achievers are admitted to centres catering for their particular needs.

The tendency is to restrict the number of students admitted to these schools for very low achievers as the stress is on the integration, as far as possible, of very low achievers within the main stream. One has to bear in mind that, as far as possible, even mentally handicapped pupils should be integrated within the main stream – but in practice is has been found that very low achievers make better progress in schools specifically catering for them than in general secondary schools – probably because of an even lower teacher-student ratio.

During the first two-year cycle in junior lyceums and the first three-year cycle in secondary schools, students follow a common curriculum that is compulsory and serves to orientate and prepare the academic foundations towards later studies (see the timetable on pages 42 and 43).

During the more determinative second cycle of three years in junior lyceums and two years in secondary schools, during which students opt to study one or two new subjects alongside a compulsory core curriculum, students choose from a range of subjects that help them to achieve their vocational and/or higher education expectations.

5. Trade schools

At the end of their third year in junior lyceums and area secondary schools, students can proceed to a trade school where a technological bias is given for further studies. Trade schools are now being further integrated within the secondary education cycle and being reformed to offer a wide technological basis rather than a trade or trades as hitherto.

As was the case in other countries, trade schools tended to cater for lower achievers when they were originally established in the early 1970s and, additionally, they tried to cope with the 14-year-olds who suddenly discovered they had to continue their studies when the school leaving age was raised from 14 to 16. Eventually, trade schools established themselves and became an attractive option for students who preferred to be trained in a trade of their choice at a relatively early age.

As from 1995, within the present reform, courses in trade schools will be in cycles. During the first cycle of two years, there will not be any specific trade skill training. Enrolment in the Extended Skills Training Scheme can be made by students on successful completion of their first cycle at the trade school, generally at the age of 16 plus. During the first year in ESTS (ESTS first phase/trade school second cycle), the trade school student would be school based and receive training in a broad band of related trades. During the next three years (ESTS second phase/trade school third cycle), the trade school student

will undergo training according to his attainment in the trade of his choice. Entry into the third cycle at the trade school will be open to those students who have successfully completed the second cycle, and training at this stage will partly take place at the school and partly take place on attachments with industry.

The main feature of the proposed curriculum is that there should be a core element in each subject that will be taken by each student, and an extension component for each topic in every subject, together with further topics in the subject, which will be taken by the more able and more enterprising student. It is envisaged that the trade school students who are able to master the extension components in a particular subject will be in a position to attempt the Secondary Education Certificate examinations in that subject like their counterparts in the other secondary schools. The ultimate objective is that the number of trade school students able to master the extension component in the various subjects on the curriculum will progressively increase. Thus, the aim of providing universal certification of all trade school students at the age of 16 will eventually be achieved.

The proposed programme for "Technology education" will move from the teaching of specific skills towards teaching general skills, whilst ensuring that the teaching situation remains experiential. The pedagogy will be based on an educational programme of moving from the practical to the abstract. The process should encourage flexibility, and the transferability of knowledge should make future retraining requirements possible in an increasingly mobile workforce.

6. Secondary schools for very low achievers

Pupils who at the end of year 6 in primary schools obtain less than 15% in Maltese, English and mathematics in their annual examination results, who have consistently performed poorly, who have particularly low motivation and academic skills and who are not considered mature enough to benefit from a standard secondary education course are admitted into a secondary school designed to provide remedial education, concentrating on basic numeracy, literacy and elementary craft training.

During the first three years of the course, students spend most of their time with one teacher, as they used to do when they were in primary school, so as to acquire a degree of stability most of these students require. The teacher teaches the basic subjects together with a number of other enrichment subjects such as art and music, and the rest of the time is spent with a craft teacher and a physical education teacher. The emphasis is on the practical application of the subjects taught. During the latter two years of the course,

students are taught a number of crafts and trades while consolidating basic academic subjects. The course is of five years' duration but students who perform exceptionally well may be transferred to a secondary school or to a trade school.

7. Private secondary schools

A person or institution wishing to establish a private school applies for a licence to the Minister of Education. The minister shall grant the licence where the applicant is the Catholic Church or any other voluntary society, religious or otherwise, of a non-profit making character and where the school conforms with the national minimum conditions. Historically, the Catholic Church has a particular position in education on the island because of its pioneering work on a large scale and its continuing interest in the field. Church schools are heavily subsidised by the state.

The education act empowers the Education Division to inspect and to supervise the administration of every school, including private schools, and to ensure that the National Minimum Curriculum, to which students are entitled, is being delivered.

The core curriculum includes those subjects in the National Minimum Curriculum (Maltese, English, mathematics, religion, history, geography, social studies, physical education) that have to be studied by all students throughout their secondary education, and excludes options or other subjects studied during one cycle only.

Pupils attending private primary schools generally proceed to a private secondary school. Private primary school pupils can transfer to a state secondary school. Pupils in private schools that cater only for the primary level have to compete to obtain a place in another private secondary school or to qualify for admission into a junior lyceum; otherwise they attend state secondary schools. Some pupils from state primary schools sit for a highly competitive admission examination to join a private secondary school. Some fee-paying private secondary schools accept students without an admission examination.

Private schools for girls generally cater for both the primary and the secondary level. Hence, the number of vacant places available for newly admitted female students into secondary schools is very small and generally in non-church secondary schools. More places are available for male students in private secondary schools especially since many of these schools do not have a primary level counterpart.

Private secondary schools are expected to satisfy the requirements of the National Minimum Curriculum and lesson distribution is generally similar to that in state schools. Private secondary schools have traditionally been of the grammar school type with great emphasis on academic education, including commercial and scientific subjects. There are no private technical or special education schools on the island. Private schools are mostly run by the Catholic Church but there are a few strictly private schools, generally administered by foundations on a non-profit making basis. Each school has its own particular style and identity, generally depending on the aims of the order of nuns or friars running it or of its founders. Non-church schools, originally very few in number, are now developing and flourishing, enriching the whole educational spectrum, especially at secondary level.

At secondary level, state and church schools are single-sex schools while some other secondary schools cater for both sexes. The only exception is a very small number of students in trade schools (schools for craftsmen, tailoring, etc.) which accept both male and female students. Only a few free-paying, strictly private secondary schools accept both sexes. Education at post-secondary level is provided in schools for both sexes.

8. Absenteeism

Student absenteeism is insignificant in junior lyceums, is low in the lower forms of secondary schools but higher in the upper forms of secondary schools. Absenteeism is a problem in the upper forms of trade schools and centres for very low achievers and it is generally higher among boys than it is among girls. The main causes of absenteeism seem to be a lack of student motivation, which may be caused by both students' personal record of continuous educational failure and educational poverty of the student's family and may be the result also of an inadequate curriculum and approach to teaching and learning. Teacher absenteeism generally reflects the overall situation of the school. A number of absent students, especially those registered in trade schools, generally find work either in a family workshop or business or with friends of the family. There are stringent regulations against the employment of minors under the age of 16 and employment inspectors regularly visit places of work in order to ensure that no minor is being employed. Leaving school before the compulsory school leaving age is granted only in very exceptional cases by the Education Division.

9. The curriculum

The 1988 Education Act empowers the Minister of Education and Human Resources to set and monitor the National Minimum Curriculum in both state and private schools. Legal Notice 103 of 1990 refers.

The aims, functions and methods of secondary education

There is no real break between the primary and the secondary level of education, and none should be artificially created. The higher age bracket and the different phase of psychological development of the students at this level point to a difference in aims, functions and methods.

The aims of secondary education, according to this National Minimum Curriculum, are threefold:

– the further development within widened dimensions of each student's intellectual, affective and physical abilities and potentialities;

– the training of the young mind in the pursuit of knowledge and reason, and the provision of a sufficient body of notions that would form each individual's basis for right of judgment and proper value formation;

– the initiation into the process of qualification at a later stage for a working life.

It is emphasised that education at this level should not be deemed to be terminal or complete but should be considered as an important transitional phase in the whole process of formal education.

The National Minimum Curriculum describes the functions of secondary education. Secondary education is considered against the background of a legal compulsory requirement and as such encompasses the whole mass of students who are not mentally disadvantaged. A wide range of abilities and needs has to be catered for, but its function is not merely that of quickening the pace of personal development and formation, but also that of moulding the nation, establishing the desired new cultural and technological profile for the whole country.

Although only the first three years of secondary level are common to all pupils in state schools, certain core subjects are retained throughout the full five years of the 11-16 age period.

The system has a bipartite branching into a broad tripartite system in the state school system. This classification or streaming exercise is not deemed as a point of arrival, but is continually reviewed so as to establish a structure that can best achieve:

– a workforce, in greater proportion literate and trained, qualified and specialised, as well as able and flexible to retrain, re-specialise or specialise later in a narrower field;

– citizens adhering to a wide and cultural consensus on an increasingly higher level.

When it deals with methods, the National Minimum Curriculum states that at this stage, the diversity of sources of knowledge, the exercise of options in certain subjects or group of subjects of learning and the differentiation of approach required by the different disciplines stimulate inquisitiveness, pluralism, tolerance and independence.

While in the primary school, knowledge and instruction are usually derived from one single source, although there are a number of peripatetic teachers for certain subjects, in the secondary level the sources of knowledge and training are numerous, and instead of being taught and instructed, the student is encouraged to follow the path in the process of self-learning and self-education and in becoming convinced of the importance of accepting and not merely conforming to norms of conduct. From activity and project work, the students will be led to arrive at conclusions through research methods and problem solving.

Ultimately, the student should be educated to exercise freedom with responsibility.

The National Minimum Curriculum for secondary schools is divided into five divisions:

- normative;
- communicative;
- cognitive/scientific;
- cultural accretion;
- action/work oriented.

When it deals with examinations, the National Minimum Curriculum states that while every effort should be made to introduce cumulative assessments and to play down the negative aspects of examinations, these should include an oral element in languages and the normative core subjects, and a component of practical testing in the sciences and action-work oriented options. A greater reliance on oral testing should be aimed at; preparing a more pronounced oral communicative ability in our students.

Syllabuses

The implementation of the National Minimum Curriculum depends on the syllabuses set in the various areas of study that it incorporates. The "minimum" of the National Curriculum is not easy to quantify or to translate into

syllabuses that are expected to be produced at national level to bind all schools. School syllabuses have often depended on and followed the syllabuses set by universities, both local and foreign, or other educational institutions, offering qualifying examinations at the end of the first five years of secondary education.

State schools syllabuses for the five-year secondary education course generally lead to the local Secondary Education Certificate Examinations set by the local university and the General Certificate of Education, Ordinary Level, of British examining boards. On the other hand, the syllabuses for post secondary courses generally lead to the Advanced Level or Intermediate Level Certificates offered by the local university or the Advanced Level Certificate awarded by British examining boards. But other courses are also offered that qualify students for the award of certificates or diplomas issued by other local or foreign institutions, such as the City and Guilds of London Institute.

Number of weekly periods allocated to core subjects and options in the school timetable

In terms of Legal Notice 109/90, revised in 1994, the curriculum to be followed in all secondary schools is as follows:

Subjects	Number of periods				
	First cycle		Second cycle		Trade school
	Secondary school	Junior lyceum	Secondary school	Junior lyceum	
Normative core					
Religious knowledge	2	2	2	2	2
Civics and environmental attitudes	1	1	1	1	1
Sport/physical education	2	2	1	1	1
Communicative core					
Maltese	4	3	4	3	3
English	5	5	5	6	4
Mathematics	5	5	5	5	4
Languages option (besides English)	4	4	4	3	
Information technology	1	1			
Computer awareness			1	1	1

Subjects	Number of periods				
	First cycle		Second cycle		Trade school
	Secondary school	Junior lyceum	Secondary school	Junior lyceum	
Scientific core					
Integrated science	4	4			
Physics			4	4	
Geography	1	2	1	1	1
Cultural accretion					
Maltese history within wide context	1	2	1	1	1
Art/music/literature appreciation	1	2	1	1	
Work-oriented core					
Personal and social education and one of the following:	2	2			
– Technical design – Craft – Home economics – Needlework	} 2	} 2			
Language option			5	4	
Subject option				4	
Trade studies (theory and practice)					17
Total number of lessons per week	35	37	35	37	35

Notes:

1. Information technology and computer awareness was introduced in all secondary schools as from 1994.

2. In form 1 junior lyceum and form 1 secondary schools, students choose one foreign language (in addition to English, which is learnt in all primary and secondary schools) from: Arabic, French, German and Italian.

All students will have studied both Maltese and English as compulsory subjects during their primary education.

In addition, they choose one subject from the following: technical design, home economics, craft and needlework.

3. In form 3 junior lyceums, students are required to select two subjects from the following groups:

- Normative core: social studies;

- Communicative core: another foreign language from among: Arabic, French, German, Italian, Latin, Russian and Spanish;

- Scientific core: chemistry, biology, home economics, geography and technical design;

- Cultural accretion core: Maltese history, art, music, literature;

- Work-oriented core: home economics, needlework, technical design, business studies and craft.

The combination of options can be as follows:

- Option A: another language from those listed under communicative core, and one from history, social studies, art, music, literature, geography, business studies;

- Option B: two science subjects from among those listed under scientific core;

- Option C: two from Maltese history, European history, social studies, geography, music, art and literature;

- Option D: two from home economics, needlework, technical design and craft.

4. "35" and "37" lessons refer to the number of periods and not to the number of hours. Each period is 45 minutes during full-days, and 30 minutes during half-days. Hence, during full-days, school (learning) time is 27 hours 30 minutes and during half-days it is 23 hours 45 minutes, in each case including a 15 minute mid-morning break daily but excluding a longer midday break. The number of periods – 35 in secondary and trade schools and 37 in

junior lyceums – applies throughout the school course. The teacher's class contact (teaching) time is dealt with elsewhere (page 61: teaching load).

5. In form 4 of secondary schools, students are required to select one subject from the following list: Arabic, French, German, Italian, history, social studies, geography, biology, chemistry, business studies, graphical communication, art, craft and design, home economics and needlework.

6. All students in forms 3 to 5 of junior lyceums and forms 4 and 5 of secondary schools attend at least four personal and social education seminars covering core aspects of life-skills.

7. It is hoped to introduce a computer studies option in both junior lyceums and secondary schools as from September 1996.

8. As explained elsewhere, trade schools are being reformed, and the distribution of lessons may change significantly.

There are no major differences in the curricula and relative syllabuses for junior lyceums and secondary schools, but junior lyceum students are expected to go deeper into the subject than their peers in secondary schools. The tendency is for junior lyceum students to choose the more academic options after form 2 and for secondary school students to choose the less demanding option after form 3. One finds, for example, very few students opting for chemistry and biology in secondary schools.

An interesting characteristic of the Maltese education system is the emphasis placed on the acquisition of a number of foreign languages. It is essential for a small island like Malta to be able to communicate with the outside world. All secondary school students study at least three languages, very often four. While Maltese is the national language, both Maltese and English are official languages, and they would have been studied throughout the primary school cycle.

It is extremely difficult to be dogmatic about the status of English in Malta. In certain areas of the island and within the higher socio-economic groups English could be considered as a second language. But there is a wide variety of levels of proficiency, from that of English as a second language to that of English as a foreign language, with pockets of excellence where the communicative competence approaches language one level. English is generally taught as a foreign language. The widespread knowledge of English has opened wide horizons for Maltese students since textbooks in English are easily available in most subjects at all levels.

At the age of 11, a third language is chosen upon entry into a secondary school or junior lyceum; this is generally Italian in secondary schools, but

French and German are also very popular at this stage in the junior lyceums, while very few choose Arabic. Yet another language – the fourth – may be opted for in the second cycle of secondary education. The options at this level include Spanish, Russian and Latin.

Physics, mathematics, religious education, social studies and physical education are compulsory core subjects throughout secondary education (although students may opt out of religious education on grounds of conscience).

Student choices enable them to prepare for careers or further studies in several fields such as science-oriented, secretarial, administrative, business and commerce-oriented careers as well as careers requiring education in the humanities.

Practical lessons in laboratories and workshops and personal and social education lessons are normally conducted in half classes or in groups not exceeding sixteen students.

10. Post-secondary education

Students follow a five-year secondary education course between the ages of 11 and 16 when, as has been explained elsewhere, they sit for their Secondary Education Certificate Examination set by the University of Malta and/or the General Certificate of Education, Ordinary Level, set by British universities. This indicates the similarity that has hitherto existed between the British system of education and the Maltese system of education. If students decide to continue their education they join one of a variety of post-secondary educational institutions. These institutions offer nearly sixty different courses at various levels and of differing duration.

Students can follow academic courses at the upper lyceums or at the higher secondary schools. Here a very wide choice of subjects in arts and sciences is offered. Until now, students could study three subjects at Advanced Level, together with "systems of knowledge" at Intermediate Level – a cross curricular enrichment course for both science, arts and commercial courses. The reform, which is being introduced as from 1995, requires students to study two subjects at Advanced Level and three subjects at Intermediate Level, together with Systems of Knowledge at Intermediate Level. Most students aim to obtain the necessary qualifications that enable them to start a university course and their subject options generally reflect their particular interests. However, the post-secondary qualification may be seen by the student as an end in itself and lead to existing job opportunities.

Technical courses are generally offered at technical institutes or educational institutions catering for such courses. Courses undertaken lead to different

levels of qualifications from local institutions or from the City and Guilds of London Institute. Qualifications include both the Ordinary and the Higher Technician Diploma.

Vocational schools offer courses, among others, for secretaries, laboratory technicians, kindergarten assistants, as well as agriculture, art and design, health care, nautical studies, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and tourism. This is a major growth area.

Students following post-secondary courses can generally join one of three schemes: the Extended Skill Training Scheme or the Technician Apprenticeship Scheme or the Sixth Form Introduction Scheme and receive an allowance as an incentive towards further studies. The Technician Apprenticeship Scheme aims to update the skill level and performance of apprentices in preparation for employment. The TAS was set up to meet the changing needs of industry and to provide students at post-secondary level with the opportunity of following technical careers and gaining financial assistance. Both schemes have a study phase and a work phase. The TAS generally caters for the more advanced student.

Evening courses are organised in various centres. The courses range from academic (Ordinary Level, Advanced Level and revision at both Ordinary and Advanced Levels) in almost all subjects taught in secondary schools, technical courses in various trades and cultural subjects.

Private post-secondary schools (sixth forms), because of their smaller intake, offer a more limited number of study options than their counterparts in the state system. They offer courses in arts, sciences and commercial subjects but not in technical areas.

Percentage of age cohort enrolled in post-secondary education:[1]

1986/87	1991/92	1992/93
34,3%	49,8%	52,9%

1. It is recalled that "post-secondary education" refers to what in most other countries is called "upper secondary". See pages 16 and 17.

Post-secondary general education (pre-university orientation)

	1986/87	1991/92	1992/93
% of age cohort enrolled	34.3%	36.2%	40.3%
% of males	31.5%	35.4%	38.1%
% of females	37.4%	37.0%	42.8%

Percentages of age cohort enrolled in full-time post-secondary vocational and technical education in the state sector

1986/87	1991/92	1992/93
9.8%	13.6%	12.5%

Percentage of age cohort completing general post-secondary education (various courses)

1986/87	1991/92	1992/93
26.3%	35.0%	33.1%

Students completing general post-secondary education – new lyceums, higher secondary schools, private sixth forms (pre-university orientation)

	1986/87	1992/93
% of age cohort enrolled	11.6%	20.9%
% of males	12.3%	19.7%
% of females	10.9%	22.1%

11. Evaluation and assessment

Pupil assessment

Most state pupils sit for the junior lyceum admission examination in Maltese, English, mathematics, social studies and religion (unless parents object on grounds of conscience that their children be examined in religious knowledge). This is not a competitive but a qualifying examination. In fact, about 50% of those pupils who sit for this examination qualify for admission to

junior lyceums. This examination has the partial function of evaluating the primary education phase by providing an audit of performance in five subjects for 11-year-olds.

Although a record of assessments of achievement and examination results of pupils is kept in a cumulative record card as a pupil profile at primary school level, no consideration is taken of these records for the transition from primary to secondary education. However, the cumulative record cards are passed by the primary school to the secondary school where record keeping of the student's personal development, progress, achievements and behaviour is maintained.

Teachers in state secondary schools are expected to correct and mark students' work and to assess regularly their students' achievement in the subject they teach in order to be able to award an assessment mark at any time during the schoiastic year.

Two types of examinations are held at both primary and secondary education level in state schools. Half-yearly examinations are school based and are prepared and set by the school administrators with the direct participation of the subject teachers with reference to the areas and topics covered. These examinations are meant to indicate both the level of attainment of students and the effectiveness of the teaching method.

All state secondary school students sit for the national annual examinations in the subjects they study. To ensure contact with the realities of the classroom, examination papers are prepared by the subject education officers with the collaboration of subject co-ordinators and experienced teachers of the subject sitting as a subject panel. The Test Construction Unit provides the professional and technical support for the production of examination papers. The examination results sent by the schools to parents show not only the marks obtained but also the teacher's overall assessment, a grade in each subject and any relevant remarks by the teacher and/or the head of school.

Promotion from one form to another depends on the assessments and results obtained by students. Generally speaking, students in secondary schools are not encouraged to repeat a year but students in junior lyceums may have to repeat one year unless they obtained passes in the main subjects of study and a number of other subjects. Available data indicate that the percentage of grade-repeating students in secondary schools is less than 2%.

The half-yearly examinations for form 5 (final year) students held during the first week of February in secondary schools are considered as the final school

examination at secondary level. However, most students go on to the Secondary Education Certificate Examinations.[1]

Students may sit for examinations in any number of subjects they choose. Not all secondary school students sit for an external examination. It is hoped that, eventually, the vast majority of students, if not all students, will sit for the Secondary Education Certificate Examination, at least in some subjects studied at secondary education level.

Private secondary schools have school based, half-yearly and annual examinations. Examination results together with records of regular assessment form the basis of student assessment. Private secondary school students sit for the end of course examinations set by the University of Malta or by the British university boards.

System evaluation

The 1988 Education Act empowers the Minister of Education and Human Resources to prescribe a National Minimum Curriculum for all schools and at all levels. The minister may also prescribe different curricula for different state schools. Legal Notice Number 103 of 1990 established the National Minimum Curriculum for Secondary Schools while Legal Notice Number 56 of 1991 set the National Minimum Curriculum for post-secondary schools. These National Minimum Curricula are binding in both state and private schools.

The 1988 Education Act also empowers the minister to set the National Minimum Conditions with which all schools must conform. These conditions mostly refer to the size and structure of schools and classes, as well as the facilities and services they have to provide and the minimum hygienic and sanitary standards they have to observe. Education Division officials can inspect any private school and report on its progress and condition.

The reformed management and administration system that is currently being introduced in the Education Division, as part of the ongoing reform of the civil service in general, aims at providing the necessary structures that will

1. Available participation and pass data concern various examination boards (generally British) but not the Malta Matriculation Board's Secondary Education Certificate Examination. Those data were as follows for 1990:

	Entries	Passes	Pass rate
Ordinary Level	26 341	12 720	47,3%
Advanced Level	5 127	3 220	62,8%
Technical	2 541	1 669	65,7%
Commercial	4 656	3 018	64,8%

develop the required strategies and provide the necessary personnel to enforce a greater measure of accountability. Concurrently, the education system in Malta is gradually being decentralised.

A new system of performance management is being introduced that will intrinsically involve a closer monitoring of performance by schools and their administrators and the individual members of staff who will be regularly evaluated by their immediate superiors. The head of school will be expected to assess and evaluate closely the work being done by the different categories of staff. The head, in turn, will be assessed and evaluated by the assistant director to whom he reports. Education officers (administration) will provide the background information about the management of schools while subject education officers monitor the work of subject teachers.

The new performance reports are open-ended. At the beginning of the year, performance objectives and criteria for their evaluation are negotiated between the supervisor and the staff member being reported on according to the job description of the staff member. The supervising officer meets the staff member during the year to review progress and to discuss progress. He may have to provide the necessary training to the staff member to enable him to reach his objectives. Final assessment at the end of the year depends on the success or failure measured against the set objectives and according to the criteria agreed upon.

Performance management will not reintroduce the older type of inspections. However, it may be instrumental in the professional development of the individual and the progress of the educational institution as much as it may enforce accountability. Performance reports are expected to provide reliable indicators in the assessment of an individual for promotion.

The various directors, assistant directors and education officers in the division are empowered to monitor and evaluate the system and its component educational institutions, sectors, units and services. With the Reorganisation Agreement of the Teaching Grades, signed in 1975 and effective as from 1974, inspectors became education officers and the role of education officers changed significantly. Education officers are more resource persons – facilitators and advisers – and are there to ensure a liaison between the Education Division and the schools, including private schools. Education officers perform different roles – education officers (administration) are primarily concerned with the administration of education at system and institution levels, subject education officers are responsible for the development of the curriculum and the teaching of the subject. Unit/service education officers manage a number of units and services. Their monitoring role at both system and institution levels is still one of their main tasks but in view of the fact that

they are working with professionals (legally, teaching was recognised as a profession by the 1988 Education Act), the former inspectorial role is practically non-existent.

To date, there is no formal structured system for the global evaluation of a state school as an effective and efficient educational institution.

The Education Division itself, as a system manager and administrator, has been closely monitored and studied by a team of local and foreign experts; proposals for fundamental reforms have been suggested and are being implemented. The top management system has been overhauled and work redistributed as indicated in the General Section of this report.

12. Educational support services

The Education Division has gradually but steadily developed a comprehensive system of educational support services. Most of these services and the related expertise and facilities are also available to private schools. Although the services support the whole educational system, from kindergarten to post-secondary education (excluding the university), most of them, by their very nature, are relevant to secondary education. Some services are teacher-oriented but the majority are student-centred. They fall under the responsibility of different directors and presently cover a wide range of educational fields, including in-service education and training, curriculum development, documentation and resource centres, testing and evaluation, sports, special educational needs, library books, textbooks, media education, and the cultural, pastoral, psychological, medical, health, safety, welfare, guidance and counselling, and religious needs of students. Some of the services will eventually be grouped together and reorganised to provide a more co-ordinated service. Most of the services are highly developed with all the necessary facilities and expertise. Although in some areas, specialist skills are not available as required. Most have depended on the personal initiative and dedication of the education officers and the staff managing them. The Education Division, through the directors responsible for the various areas, gives the necessary support.

The In-service Education and Training Service provides in-service education and training courses for casual and part-time instructors, intensive courses in pedagogy, and certificate courses in education. A very wide range of short courses are organised annually as part of a programme of regular updating of subject content and pedagogy. The courses are generally run by local experts in the field, generally education officers, with the support of specialist teachers and outsiders, sometimes together with foreign experts.

The Curriculum Development Unit is an instrument for innovation. It organises courses for trade school instructors in curriculum development and the production of learning and teaching materials.

Curriculum development and implementation falls within a newly established directorate and it is expected to make a major contribution to the development of education at all levels. It will incorporate specialist personnel, services, facilities and resource centres already existing within the Education Division.

The Teachers' Documentation and Resource Centre offers a documentation service to teachers and education administrators, runs in-service courses on resources in education, produces teaching and learning materials, is equipped with desktop publishing facilities and prepares textbooks and other materials for use in schools.

Subject resource centres provide for the learning and teaching of various subjects, including languages, physical sciences, and social sciences. They are a source of the latest reference materials for learning and teaching aids. They give advice and host in-service courses to update the learning process and organise cultural awareness programmes. Some of the centres organise meetings with specific tasks for teachers on a regular basis.

The student support services have both a proactive and retroactive approach. They are geared to tackle student problems as they arise but their main aim is to prevent problems and to provide for the healthy development of students in all directions. Student support services are generally centralised and are provided at system level but some of them have their links at educational institution level. For example, counsellors and guidance teachers in schools are co-ordinated by the Guidance and Counselling Service at Head Office, the school librarian works closely with both the textbooks distribution centre and the School Libraries Service, the health and safety teacher in school shares his responsibilities and experiences with the Health and Safety Unit in the Education Division.

The Educational Welfare Service looks after the welfare of students at all levels, tracks problem children and deals with their problems, including visiting their homes and discussing causes and remedies with parents, checks truancy, reports and prosecutes parents in court when necessary, refers students (and sometimes parents) to other agencies outside the Education Division and deals with students' requests for exemptions from school and permission to work.

The School Psychological Service, which is in the process of being reorganised, assesses children's psychological and emotional needs and suggests

proper interventions. It follows up cases and makes referrals, as appropriate, and advises both teachers and parents on how to deal with students with behavioural problems. It liaises with the Test Construction Unit on assessment and testing.

The School Medical Service advises on health education and promotion, provides a health service to schools and units, including medical examinations, ensures that basic health issues are addressed and inspects schools to ensure high standards of health. This service is provided partly by a special section of the Medical and Health Department and partly by Education Division personnel.

The Safety Unit inspects schools and assesses, ascertains and advises on safety in all areas in schools. It carries out surveys, provides literature and posters on safety, and promotes safety education.

The Guidance and Counselling Service co-ordinates guidance and counselling at system and institution levels, especially at secondary and post-secondary education levels. The service is provided by a central unit that gives all the information, training and support, and by a network of counsellors and guidance teachers at the school level. It advises students on personal growth and development and problems. It is responsible for the guidance of students and their parents during the transition from primary to secondary and from secondary to post-secondary schools and facilitates the choice of subjects, options and courses. The unit organises seminars for students on various topics. On its own and in co-ordination with other agencies, it organises awareness programmes and educational campaigns, for example, on values, sex education, drugs, smoking, drinking and parental skills. It holds regular career conventions and sets up career exhibitions at its centre and in schools. It acts as a clearing house for updated information on available courses, careers and career opportunities. It collects data for the formulation of student tracer studies and reports. It provides education-industry-commerce-services links. Guidance teachers in school work very closely with the central unit to provide a comprehensive guidance and counselling service, which encompasses both the moral and the vocational domain. In fact, meetings are held regularly for guidance teachers to discuss action programmes and to provide professional development. Guidance teachers together with the form teachers are responsible for the compilation of the cumulative record card of each student.

The Guidance and Counselling Unit is responsible for the personal and social education programme, an integral part of the curriculum during the first three years in secondary schools and the first two years in junior lyceums. During the second cycle of secondary education, personal and social educa-

tion takes the form of day seminars organised by specialists and are held at special centres.

Religious counsellors cater for the spiritual and religious counselling and needs of students and organise spiritual activities at the school level. Although religious knowledge is a compulsory subject at all levels of primary and secondary education, students may opt out of the subject on grounds of conscience.

The Special Education Section runs the special schools that cater for the following needs: hearing and sight impairment, mental and physical handicaps, emotional disturbance, speech defects, educational retardation and subnormality and multi-handicaps. This section provides advice to schools and teachers on the teaching, education and care of students with special needs within an ongoing plan for the integration of these children within the mainstream wherever and as far as possible. The section advises teachers on the necessary skills and gives the support service and facilities according to the specific needs of the students. Efforts are being made to make normal schools as accessible as possible to all children against the background of a national access campaign. The section provides a peripatetic teaching service for students who are home bound or who have a long stay in hospital. Independent agencies and associations are very active in this area.

The Youth Service Organisation organises extracurricular activities at national level, such as competitions, cultural visits, exhibitions, concerts and participation in carnival festivities. It runs a number of residential centres, summer clubs and camps and organises student exchanges with a number of European countries. It concentrates on a learning by doing approach, mostly in the recreational, cultural and educational exchange fields. It is responsible for the President's Award Scheme, which covers practical and cultural activities for students. It provides certain apparata to schools that do not have their own.

The Test Construction Unit organises the national end-of-year examinations in all subjects at all levels from year 4 primary to form 5 secondary schools and the admission examinations into the junior lyceums. It advises on testing, examination and evaluation. It is responsible for the printing and distribution of examination papers that are prepared by Examination boards. It compiles statistical data and carries out item analyses and issues reports on examinations by way of feedback to both the Education Division and schools.

The Media Education and Broadcasting Centre produces television and radio programmes with a cross-curricular or subject specific approach. It makes use of the national television and radio channels but also has a cable television

channel at its disposal. It is responsible for media education for both teachers and students and runs courses and seminars for this purpose. It co-ordinates an educational video library.

The Drama Unit through its peripatetic specialist teachers promotes theatre-in-education programmes in schools and produces and publishes materials in this area. It operates a fully equipped resource centre, which includes a text and music library. The unit helps schools in drama productions, and organises drama encounters both locally and abroad. It participates in media education and in educational campaigns organised by other units. It organises in-service courses on drama in education for teachers. Although not forming part of its work within the Education Division, the Unit also hosts the Drama Unit Theatre Project for young actors.

The School Library Service helps to procure and distribute books for school libraries for both students and the general public, advises school librarians on the choice of books and the running of libraries, and provides professional support to schools. The MCE bookshop procures textbooks for state schools.

A statistics unit collects statistical data from schools and other units regarding the number and age of students in each class and course in schools, choice of subjects, the type of teachers and teacher qualifications, school facilities and spaces at the various levels, etc. The data provide the educational profile and become the indispensable basis for educational planning and development in the centralised system of education in a small state.

13. School staff

Heads of school and assistant heads of school

Heads of school are responsible for the proper management of the staff, the organisation of the school, the maintenance of discipline, orderliness and cleanliness, the upkeep of the school plant, the keeping of records of pupils, staff and other relevant information, the timely requisition of utilities and the proper management of finances, stores and other material resources. The head of school is the school council's secretary/treasurer and acts as liaison officer with parents, staff and officials at head office. The role of head of school has evolved over the years, from that of head teacher, a leading professional, to that of head of school, a leading administrator and manager although the role of a leading professional must always be kept at the forefront. The head of school is not assigned any specific teaching duties.

The head of school is selected by an interview following a call for applications which is open to assistant heads of school with a minimum five years' service

in the grade of assistant head of school and who are in possession of the Diploma in Educational Administration and Management of the University of Malta or who have successfully completed a course in education and management organised for the purpose by the education authorities.

The assistant head of school assists the head in the running of the school and stands in for the head of school in the latter's absence. The filling of vacancies in the grade of assistant head of school is by selection through an interview following a call for applications open to teachers with a minimum of ten years' teaching experience, of which at least five years must have been in state schools, and who have carried out their service for at least five years in the sector (primary or secondary) in which the appointment is being made.

The post of head of school and assistant head of school is an appointment of a permanent nature and is not linked to any particular school except as provided for in the Government – Malta Union of Teachers Agreement of 1994. A state head of school and an assistant head of school can be transferred from one school to another according to the exigencies of the service.

Teachers

Teachers in state schools are civil servants employed and deployed by the Education Division following an open call for applications. Conditions of service are regulated according to government–trade union agreements and other conditions and regulations established for the general civil service. Teachers in state schools are transferred from one school to another or from one educational sector to another (for example, from the primary to the secondary or to the post-secondary and vice versa) either at their own request or according to the needs of the various schools.

Teachers in private schools are employed by the educational institution in which they are working according to private schools–trade union agreements, which are generally similar to those negotiated between the unions and the government.

A brief historical note

The improved qualifications of teachers performing duties in secondary schools have generally reflected the changes carried out in the pre-service training of teachers over the years.

In 1945, two teacher training colleges, one for male and another for female students, were established, offering a one-year full-time course leading to a teacher's certificate on the model of similar institutions in the United Kingdom.

Teacher training colleges, established according to the model of training colleges in the United Kingdom, started offering residential courses of a two-year duration to student-teachers in 1953/54. Teaching practice and the final examinations were monitored by external examiners from the London University Institute of Education.

In 1971, the training college course became three years long and was modelled on the recommendations of the Robins Report in the United Kingdom.

In 1973, teacher education was reorganised. The two training colleges were amalgamated into a co-educational non-residential Malta College of Education, administered and staffed by the Department of Education.

In 1974, a one-year Postgraduate Certificate of Education was introduced for graduate students who had not already qualified in pedagogy.

In 1977, a Bachelor of Arts (Education) course was introduced at the university to replace the certificate course. Yet theoretical studies at the university continued to be complemented by school and teaching experience in the schools .

In 1978, the Faculty of Education was established at the University of Malta offering a Bachelor of Education degree at honours level. The course formed part of the then existing Student-Worker Scheme and involved five semesters of academic study and another five semesters of work experience in schools. Since then, students have had to present a dissertation following research on an educational aspect in part fulfilment of the degree requirements. This was a significant development and, hopefully, these dissertations together with other dissertations written by Diploma in Education students and more advanced dissertations undertaken by Master of Education students and Tracer Studies carried out by the Education Division will form the nucleus of an as yet non-existent institution for educational research which is planned as a crucial support service – probably a joint initiative between the university and the Education Division.

As from 1987, the Bachelor of Education (Honours) course no longer formed part of the Student-Worker Scheme and became a four-year full-time study course.

In the same year the Faculty of Education embarked on a Master of Education programme.

The teaching staff in secondary schools is mainly composed of professional teachers who have either followed a College of Education course and were awarded a Teacher's Certificate with a specialisation in the subject they are teaching, or obtained a Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree from the

University of Malta or are graduates of the local university in one or more subjects and possess a Postgraduate Certificate of Education or are graduate teachers without the pedagogical qualification. Then there are instructors who are generally less academically qualified but who have received a Certificate of Education and have a specialisation in the subject they teach. A number of casual or part-time teaching staff have to date been engaged in order to fill shortages, especially in certain subjects for which the necessary qualified staff are not available.

All teachers must obtain a Permanent Warrant according to criteria established by the 1988 Education Act in order to be able to teach. Teachers who do not qualify fully for the Permanent Warrant are awarded a Temporary Warrant. Teachers with a Permanent Warrant who have been selected for the post after an open call for applications have a permanent post following a probationary one-year period. They are deployed according to the exigencies of the service but a requested transfer from one school to another is often granted.

According to the 1994 Agreement between the Government and the Malta Union of Teachers on the Classification, Regrading, and Assimilation of the Education Class, entry into the grade of teacher is through a call for applications open to holders of a Permanent Warrant or to persons who qualify for one in accordance with the 1988 Education Act. As from 1994, should the Education Division find it necessary to engage graduates who are in possession of a degree in a discipline other than in education and who do not qualify for a Permanent Warrant to perform teaching duties on a full-time basis, such graduates will be engaged as temporary teachers and will be paid on a salary scale equivalent to the minimum of a teacher's lowest scale.

Owing to the rapidly increasing number of students entering university and the number of students continuing their education after completing the secondary education course, the number of qualified teachers available cannot cope with the requirements of schools at all levels. University lecturers had often been teaching in post-secondary institutions before being appointed lecturers. Teachers in post-secondary institutions had generally been teaching in secondary schools prior to being posted in post-secondary institutions. Besides, teaching in certain subjects (practical lessons in laboratories, personal and social education, home economics, art, craft and needlework) is being carried out in small groups roughly equivalent to half a class. Shortages of qualified teachers are generally felt in specialised subjects, especially in the sciences.[1]

1. The author acknowledges the information provided by Professor C J. Farrugia for the section on the development of teacher education in Malta.

Teachers with special responsibility

A subject co-ordinator is responsible for the co-ordination of a subject in one school or in more than one school. The filling of subject co-ordinator vacancies is by selection through an interview following a call for applications open to teachers who have not less than ten years teaching experience, of which at least five years must be in state schools and who have taught the subject offered for at least five years in state schools.

The school counsellor is selected through an interview following a call for applications open to teachers who are in possession of a recognised Diploma in Counselling. The selected candidate must have taught for not less than ten years, of which at least five must be in state schools, and who must have served for at least five years as guidance teacher in state schools. A counsellor performs duties at both institution and system levels. He organises pastoral and vocational care and is instrumental in the implementation of programmes and activities organised by the Guidance and Counselling Service at national level.

A guidance teacher generally has already obtained a Diploma in Counselling. The number of guidance teachers in every secondary school depends on the size of the school population. The guidance teacher together with the form teacher is primarily responsible for the pastoral and vocational care of students. He helps students with the transition from primary to secondary schools and from secondary schools to the post-secondary schools and in making the right choice of subjects, courses and career. He advises parents on their children, organises educational and career visits, helps in the administration of psychological and other tests, and keeps the cumulative record cards.

A form teacher is assigned duties with every class in a secondary school. He is responsible for the pastoral care of every student in the class, guides students on their personal and educational development and individual problems and, after consulting other teachers, advises parents on the progress and behaviour of their children. He is responsible also for the records about the students under his care and co-ordinates the assessments of each student.

Secondary schools enjoy the services of at least one teacher librarian who is responsible for the running of the library and the carrying out of library work with students, and the distribution of free textbooks, among other matters. A health and safety officer advises on the safety of the school environment and equipment and promotes health education programmes.

The posts of teachers, counsellors and subject co-ordinators are of a permanent nature while the posts of form teachers, guidance teachers, teacher librarians, and health and safety officers are renewable every year. Form

teacher duties are assigned by the head of school. Other posts of special responsibility are assigned through an internal call for applications issued by the Education Division. In assigning guidance, librarian and health and safety duties, consideration is given to specialist qualifications in the particular field.

Other staff

Secondary school support staff include clerks and caretakers, but may also include laboratory technicians, a messenger, a handyman, and watchmen, depending on the size, condition, position, type and situation of the school.

14. The school year

Teaching commences on the fourth Monday in September and ends on 6 July or on the day prior to the commencement of the annual examinations. Teachers on in-service training attend school from 15 September or up to 14 July. All teachers are expected to attend in-service training on a regular basis. All teachers attend school two working days prior to the fourth Monday in September.

School holidays are:

Summer: 15 July to 14 September;

First mid-term: 1, 2 and 3 November (provided that should the 2 November falls on a Saturday or Sunday, an additional day shall be granted in lieu);

Christmas: 23 December to 6 January;

Easter: Wednesday before to Wednesday after Easter;

Second mid-term: Monday and Tuesday preceding Ash Wednesday.

A day off is given in lieu of each of those public holidays which fall on a Saturday or Sunday within the school year.

Public holidays: 1 January, 10 February, 19 March, 1 May, 7 June, 29 June, (15 August, 8 September), 21 September, 13 December.

Teachers are entitled to take up to 16 hours 30 minutes special leave during the scholastic year. This leave cannot be availed of just before or just after the holiday periods.

15. School hours and class contact for teachers

School hours for secondary pupils are as follows:

– from the fourth Monday in September to 31 May – 5 hours 30 minutes per day, that is, 27 hours 30 minutes per week, including the morning break;

– from 15 September to the Friday preceding the fourth Monday in September, and from 1 June to 14 July – 3 hours 45 minutes per day, that is, 18 hours 45 minutes per week, including the mid-morning break.

The teaching load of secondary school teachers must not exceed a maximum of 26 periods, including replacements, of 45 minutes each per week, on full days, and of 30 minutes each during half days. Subject co-ordinators and guidance teachers have a maximum load of 14 lessons per week while teacher librarians have a reduced load according to the size of the schools they work in. The reduced teaching load enables the teachers concerned to carry out their particular duties.

The maximum number of students in a class is 30 in primary schools and in forms 1 and 2 in secondary schools and junior lyceums; 25 in forms 3, 4 and 5 in junior lyceums, secondary schools and in post-secondary schools. In practice, many classes have less than the established maximum number of students. Classes in opportunity centres for low achievers, for personal and social education and for practical subjects are to be of not more than 16.

16. Salaries and allowances

Government employees may be on one of twenty scales, the top civil servant receiving a scale 1 salary while the least paid government worker receives a scale 20 salary. The teachers' stream of the education class is structured as follows (at the time of writing 1 Lm = US$ 2,78):

Category	Grade	Scale Number	Maximum per annum (Lm)	Minimum
A	Director general	3	7 701	
	Director	4	7 001	
	Assistant director	5	6 204	
B	Education officer	6	5 808	4 695
	Head of school	6		
	Assistant head of school	7	5 408	4 424
	School counsellor	7		
	Subject co-ordinator	7		
	Teacher	7		
		8	5 065	4 159
		9	4 752	3 918

Entry into the grade of teacher is on scale 9. A teacher proceeds to scale 8 after ten years service in the grade of teacher in state schools and then proceeds to scale 7 after a further ten years, in both cases subject to satisfactory

performance. Temporary teachers (graduates who do not qualify for a Permanent Warrant) are paid a salary equivalent to the minimum of scale 10 (Lm 3 705).

Salary scale 20 is Lm 2 480.

In addition, salaries have to be topped up with cost of living increases and bonuses given to all employees.

The following allowances are paid for relevant academic qualifications:

Doctorate	Lm 400 per annum
Master's	Lm 300 per annum
First degree	Lm 200 per annum
Diploma	Lm 150 per annum

School population and other allowances:

Education officer	Lm 350 per annum if appointed prior to 25 August 1994; Lm 150 per annum if appointed after that date.
Head of school	Lm 150 per annum
Head of school (over 900 students)	Lm 350 per annum
Head of school (751-900 students)	Lm 250 per annum
Head of school (501-750 students)	Lm 200 per annum
Assistant head of school	Lm 150 per annum
School counsellor	Lm 150 per annum
Subject co-ordinator	Lm 150 per annum
Teachers	Lm 120 per annum to cover duties of special responsibility, including guidance, librarianship, remedial teaching, health and safety, special education, drama, form duties (primary and secondary).

17. The European dimension

Malta became an active member of the Council of Europe soon after it gained independence in 1964. It participates fully in Council of Europe activities at the political, cultural and educational levels given its historical, cultural and geographical context. It is seeking to join the European Union at the earliest possible occasion. Malta is fully conscious that present membership of the Council of Europe and the European Union is bound to grow.

Malta's history has been a succession of struggles to achieve and preserve freedom and independence from foreign powers that occupied the island because of its traditionally strategic position in the middle of the Mediterranean. Education and training in democratic values treasured in democratic Europe ensure the safeguarding of that hard won freedom for future generations.

In the past the Maltese system of education understandably followed the educational system and developments in Britain although changes were tailored to the local culture and educational needs. Until relatively recently, most courses at secondary and post-secondary school levels were geared towards examinations set by British examining boards in the academic subjects and towards the various qualifications obtained from the City and Guilds of London Institute for the technical subjects.

The University of Malta provided its own matriculation examinations and students tended to sit for both local and British examinations. The education system formulated syllabuses that also satisfied requirements set by British examinations. This had the advantage of widening the local educational perspective and the disadvantage of ignoring, to a certain extent, the particular local needs. The reforms being carried out in the content and style of examinations at the end of the secondary education course to satisfy local specific needs and as a requisite for admission into the University of Malta are intended to lead to a closer link with the National Minimum Curriculum for secondary schools. The examination system that emerges broadly resembles the pattern of the baccalaureate type of examination.

English is taught at a very early age in the primary school. Teaching and learning at primary and secondary levels is carried out in both Maltese and English. Most of the textbooks for a wide range of subjects, such as the social and the physical sciences, are actually in English. When students enter the secondary school they start learning a third (European) language. The most popular choice is Italian. Italian used to be an official language and the language of culture among the educated class; in fact, it used to be taught even at primary schools. French is widely studied and is the fourth language in popularity while German takes fifth place. After two years in a junior lyceum or three years in an area secondary school, the fourth language may be chosen if the student takes a language option. Other languages learnt, but less commonly so, in secondary schools are Spanish, Russian, Latin and Arabic. Owing to Malta's proximity to the north African countries, Arabic could and should be more widely studied for cultural and trade reasons.

European languages have always had an important place in the secondary school curriculum. The percentage of secondary pupils studying foreign languages for 1991/92 was as follows:

English	100%
Italian	52%
French	36%
German	9%
Spanish	2%
Arabic	3%
Russian	0,15%
Latin	0,06%

Because of its size, Malta has always had to reach out, mostly towards the European mainland and languages have made communication easier with the old continent. In 1993, the number of tourists visiting Malta was 1 063 213. Of these, 520 778 came from the United Kingdom, 85 671 from Italy, 176 077 from Germany, 21 276 from Scandinavian countries and 10 314 from the United States. About 64% of the total exports from Malta in 1993 were delivered to the European Union while about 72% of Malta's imports were from the European Union.

The multilingual enrichment of the curriculum ensures better communication at the international level and facilitates understanding and respect for the opinion of others in the exercise of tolerance and democracy. This international aspect is strengthened further by the fullest possible participation in school visits and exchanges with a number of European partners.

Maltese art, architecture and culture have all-pervading imprints of European heritage. Malta's history itself reflects the vicissitudes and the prosperity of western Europe. The Romans were in Malta for hundreds of years, the Normans, the Germans, the Angevins and the Aragonese were on the island too. The Knights of Malta brought with them the culture of the various European countries they hailed from. French rule lasted only two years but the British stayed on the island for more than 170 years. Indeed, Maltese history, a compulsory subject at both primary and secondary education levels, can only be studied and appreciated within its European context. Yet, the Island of Malta is European with a difference because of its central Mediterranean position, bridging as it were Europe and Africa.

The European dimension has always formed part of the Maltese curriculum. But now a determined organised effort is being made to formalise and strengthen the European dimension in the learning and teaching of history, geography, social studies, the arts, languages, religion, mathematics and the

sciences, bearing in mind, throughout, that the citizen of Europe can understand and appreciate his continent better if he is aware of his local culture and history. Initiatives and activities have already been organised and others are being planned.

III. Efficiency and performance

Tracer reports

The Tracer Study Report 1992 prepared by the Guidance and Counselling Services of the Education Division observed that the trends in choices of 16-year-olds established in the previous two tracer studies for 1990 and 1991, that is post-secondary school courses, work or other options, were confirmed in 1992. Notwithstanding the fact that percentage-wise, the number of students opting for post-secondary education decreased marginally, the total number of students in post-secondary education has increased by 99 (3,8%), that is from 2 554 in 1991 to 2 653 in 1992. The increase was not as dramatic as in the previous year, but it was still encouraging to note that the number of students continuing their education after completing their compulsory education was still rising. This increase was even more significant in the context of the very high rate of employment existing in Malta, a fact that is causing labour shortages and, hence, a demand for labour in some sectors of the economy, for example, tourism, construction and services.

A sustained programme of expanding post-secondary provision, with particular reference to the 16-19 age-group, has yielded very tangible results. This expansion has included the diversification of courses and the upgrading of facilities as well as increased opportunities.

In 1992, 1 417 males and 1 205 females opted to continue with their post-secondary school education. Relevant figures for the two previous years also show a constant increase in female students in post-secondary education.

	1990		1991		1992	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Males	1 027	52	1 435	57	1 417	54
Females	934	48	1 108	43	1 207	46
Total	1 961		2 554		2 622	

In the junior lyceum/private school/secondary school sector, the number of females who opt for post-secondary education is slightly higher, that is, 1 196 females and 1 067 males, while, in trade schools/craft centres, the preponderance of males over females is very significant – 300 males and 9 females.

In the junior lyceum sector, three out of every four students (76%) opt for post-secondary school education, while in the private schools sector, four out of five students (83%) opt for post-secondary education. In the boys' junior lyceum, the percentage taking such an option compares favourably with the private schools, that is 83%.

In the trade school sector, the options for post-secondary school education are still rather reduced, especially among females. Among the factors contributing to such a situation are the following:

– so far, trade school students could only start their apprenticeship (Extended Skill Training Scheme) at the end of their fourth year (that is a year later than fifth formers);

– this could be a disincentive for such students to take the option to continue their studies;

– these students may also be partly trained for certain trades and are easily attracted into productive work, learning "by practice at their place of work";

– the family environment, expectations and culture may not be conducive to encourage such students to prolong their formal education.

Of all the post-secondary education options the most popular, that is 68%, was the academic stream, namely, upper lyceums, higher secondary school, and private sixth forms, while 21% opted for the technical stream, that is, the Fellenberg School for Industrial Electronics, technical institutes, the Precision Engineering Centre and trade schools, and 11% opted for the vocational stream, that is all other courses. There may be reasons for such a pattern of choices. The academic stream is the most popular because:

– it prepares students for eventual entry into the university besides the vocational/technical streams at a higher level;

– it is a preparatory stage for attractive employment areas such as banking and clerical careers.

Out of 1 227 students who opt to start work straight after completing their compulsory education, one finds 655 females and 472 males – a difference of 183. The only category in which one finds more males than females proceeding straight to work is, surprisingly enough, the trade school. However, this is explained by the fact that there are many more males than females in

trade schools (approximately 800 to 200 – and the number of female trade school leavers is continually going down because trade schools do not seem to be popular with girls). Nearly one-third of all school-leavers who opt for work, that is 429 out of 1 227, come from the trade schools.

Nearly half of all school-leavers, that is 661 out of 1 227 or 54%, find jobs as machine operators. Two other big groups may be mentioned: 119 out of 1 227 or 10% find jobs as salesperson, and 131 out of 1 227 or 11% work in hotels. Another 98 students described themselves as trainee tradesmen, usually meaning employed in such areas as electrician's mate where they continue with their on-the-job training on a practical level.

599 students stated that they had neither opted for post-secondary education nor for work. A substantial number (362 or 60%) stated that they were still at home – either continuing with their studies privately or through evening classes, hoping to improve their examination grades to be able to proceed to post-secondary education or to sit for public examinations or to wait for a "proper job". Another substantial number (167 or 28%) were registering for work at the time of the Tracer Study of 1992.

The student population, student intake and number of graduates of the University of Malta

The student population, student intake and number of graduates of the University of Malta since 1986/87 are as follows:

Year	Student population	Student intake	Number of graduates
1986/87	1 448	623	267
1987/88	1 867	746	252
1988/89	2 354	890	422
1989/90	2 799	816	387
1990/91	3 173	1 176	409
1991/92	3 470	1 364	867
1992/93	4 155	2 306	920
1993/94	4 893	2 150	1 100[1]
1994/95	5 800[1]		
1995/96	6.000[1]		

1. Projections or estimates.

Organisational development of the University of Malta

	1986/87	1993/94
Number of students	1448	4 893
– of which foreign	0[1]	140
– of which postgraduate	0[1]	334
Number of faculties	6	10
Number of institutes and centres	1	18
Other associated bodies	1	7
Academic staff members	120	350
Non-academic staff members	194	450

1. Probably insignificant

Student population according to faculties, University of Malta

	October 1984	October 1993
Faculty of Law	94	367
Faculty of Medicine and Surgery	364	289
Faculty of Engineering and Architecture[1]	293	296
		50
Faculty of Dental Surgery	25	24
Faculty of Education	290	772
Faculty of Management Studies[2]	313	650
Faculty of Arts[3]	–	761
Faculty of Science[3]	–	227
Faculty of Theology[3]	–	170
Degrees and diplomas awarded by institutes	–	816
Diploma and other courses	300	245
Foundation course	–	226
Total student number	1 678	4 893

1. Now two separate faculties
2. Now Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy
3. Not available at the university from the introduction of the Student Worker Scheme till they were reintroduced as from 1987

IV. Challenges, problems and prospects

1. Education for life and autonomous learning

The government insists that education should be for life and that investment in education has a unique impact on the country's socio-economic future. Education is the only road to genuine citizenship. Education should impart a social belonging in a genuine spirit of freedom. In this way, the country can have economically and culturally self-reliant citizens. Hence, there is a need to look at the student – particularly at the primary and secondary levels – from a holistic perspective.

Education is not merely a set of institutions which impart systematic information but should be a dynamic and lifelong process. In general, the emphasis should be on teaching the students how to learn. While the student is receiving knowledge, the focus should increasingly be on how they can continue to discover new facts and be able to interpret them and how knowledge can be applied critically and creatively in different situations.

In the Maltese classroom, teaching has traditionally been dominated by the teacher in class, with the teacher the agent and the student the relatively passive recipient of knowledge, generally based on the set textbook. It is hoped that there will be a gradual but steady shift from teaching to learning and that the student will be given the necessary skills and strategies to develop an autonomous learning process. This involves a change in mentality at all levels, since in the past the effectiveness of a teacher has often been evaluated on the amount of input he has given to his students. This input, so far, is expected by some educationists and most parents alike.

2. Information technology

Information technology has become a new source of education, an excellent means for autonomous learning. The educational system must prepare the basic culture for this new and challenging type of economic activity. The government believes in the full integration of computers from the initial stages of the education system through to the most sophisticated economic activities.

This entails a new work ethic, a new way of organising the work place, and a new way of creating and re-distributing wealth.

Although computers have entered Maltese homes in significant numbers, they have not, to-date, formed an integral part of the curriculum at all levels in state schools. The introduction of the use of computers in teaching, learning and education in primary schools is a major programme to be implemented. During the next few years, information technology as a cross-curricular theme will be introduced at all levels of education in order to try to catch up with gigantic steps being taken in western Europe. Information technology applications, introduced in form 1 in 1994 will move upwards to reach form 5 in 1998-99. The comprehensive use of IT across all the secondary school curriculum will then be in place in 2001-02. The present plan will introduce computer studies as an optional subject in the later years of secondary schools for students wishing to follow a technical IT course. The introduction of IT proficiency at post-secondary and tertiary levels helps prospective architects and draughtsmen to become proficient in computer-aided design, prospective lawyers to use expert systems and prospective managers to use decision support systems. Specialist IT courses are meant to generate hi-tech knowledge at technical, graduate and postgraduate levels, adult education on IT and the development of a national network linking all local educational institutions to the global information highway – Internet.

The extensive use of IT in education is consistent with the underlying educational philosophy in the National Minimum Curriculum. The long-term IT plan will entail teacher and in-service training, classroom management and other planning. This will shift the emphasis from certification to the maximisation of the individual's potential, from individual competition to collaborative competitiveness, from memorisation to reasoning and creativity.

3. National development and educational change

Since the 1950s, Malta's economy has changed beyond recognition. In the 1950s it was completely dependent on the needs and the spending of the British forces on the island. With independence, the Maltese economy started developing independently. In the late 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s the emphasis shifted to the setting up of industrial concerns that would provide jobs in the vacuum created by the gradual disappearance of the British forces. Incentives were offered to industrialists to set up shop in Malta. At the time, the number of jobs created was more important than any other consideration. Textiles at first dominated the scene. But other industries slowly followed to provide a more stable employment situation. Tourism and the tertiary services started developing at a fast space. In the 1980s, medium and heavy industry started

losing ground while hi-tech became an important contributor to the national economy.

These developments in the economy of the island were somehow reflected in the changes effected in the kind of education provided to Maltese students. Until the mid-1950s, academic education at secondary level was restricted to the very gifted students. Then more secondary schools were built so that a bigger number of students could benefit from secondary education. Secondary technical schools provided technical education without ignoring a solid academic foundation for such education. Eventually, though, the secondary technical schools lost most of their technical bias.

In the mid-1960s a College for Arts, Science and Technology was built. At about the same time the first technical institute was built followed by a second in the late-1960s.

The courses at tertiary level followed at the College for Arts, Science and Technology were eventually taken over and further developed by the university while the technician level courses started to be run by the technical institutes.

Provision of secondary education for all started in 1970. In the early 1970s the need was felt to start trade schools and later craft centres to train students in specific trade skills. Trade schools continued to deliver craft level courses.

As from 1995/96, students opting for a trade school education will be following a curriculum that is radically different from the existing one. The present proportion of 18 lessons out of 35 per week will be devoted to the teaching of academic subjects and thus be a continuation of general education. These subjects are: Maltese, English, religion, mathematics, geography, history of Malta, social studies, appreciation of art, literature and music, and physical education. The remaining 17 lessons will be devoted to the teaching of physics, technical design, technology education and computer literacy. Technical design and technology education will have a broad base rather than being strictly vocational. The component is of an experiential pre-vocational nature, meant to reach the "Design and Make" target.

There will be a core element in each subject which will be undertaken by every student, and an extension component for each topic in every subject, besides other topics in the subject, which will be covered by the abler and more enterprising students. The curriculum will allow the abler trade school student who works hard to obtain certification at Secondary Education Certificate level in seven subjects.

Secondary and post-secondary education must provide the necessary courses that are relevant to the national economy. Secondary schools are meant to provide the necessary academic background for further studies. The range of courses at post-secondary level has continued to increase and now total fifty-seven mostly of an academic, technical and vocational nature. Besides, the Extended Skill Training Scheme and the Technician Apprenticeship Scheme encourage the students, efforts by providing generous financial incentives.

4. Allocation of resources

The Maltese education system has always had to face the challenges of limited human, physical and financial resources as a natural consequence of the tiny size of the island. At the same time, the system needs to service all the requirements of a fast developing economy and to satisfy the high expectations of its people. Expertise is often limited and, as a result, the education manager's role at most levels is bound to be multi-functional. Tasks performed by teams in large countries are carried out by single individuals in Malta. This challenging situation can create prolonged stresses and strains on both individuals and the educational infrastructure, but at the same time it has succeeded in stimulating initiative and commitment. Over the years, the Maltese educational manager has learnt to provide in spite of the limited resources.

5. Teacher shortage

Progress and developments in the educational field in Malta have always been faster than the availability of qualified teachers at the different levels and in the various areas of knowledge. The demand for teachers increased as more and more students continue their education beyond the obligatory school age (16). The rich variety of subject options and combinations, especially during the second cycle of secondary education, is very often uneconomical in the deployment of teachers. The teaching of certain subjects, such as personal and social education, and practical sessions in the sciences, art, home economics and craft in small groups has exacerbated the problem further. More specialist teachers were required because of the expansion of courses at the 16-19 schools. Some of the best qualified teachers at post-secondary level take lecturing posts at the university, thus creating new vacancies. As a result, there has been a chronic teacher shortage, in spite of the fact that the Bachelor of Education (Honours) course at the university is attracting a substantial number of students. The shortage is more acute in certain areas like science and technology. On a temporary basis, the gap is sometimes filled by specialists who do not possess the required professional qualification to teach. At certain levels and in certain fields, specialists from

industry, commerce, and other sectors of the economy are recruited on a part-time basis.

One should mention here the need for qualified managers in education both at educational institution and at system levels. Heads of school and their assistants and Education Division officials, from education officers upwards, need specific professional administration and management training. A diploma course in educational administration and management run by the local university is partly remedying this need and it is hoped that in future newly appointed educational managers will have a formal qualification in management.

Although educational administrators in small states are expected to be multi-functional, there will always be a need for specialisation in a number of areas, such as planning, development, resourcing, curriculum, and financing.

6. Decentralisation

The Maltese state system of education has so far been highly centralised. The central authority provides the human, physical and financial resources required to administer state schools at all levels. The rigid application of old regulations has sometimes stilted educational development. Over-centralisation can suffocate initiative and make school administrators embarrassingly dependent on the power and authority of the central authority. As in other countries, pleas for decentralisation have come from below and the Ministry of Education and the Education Division are actively planning measures of decentralisation at various levels and in different areas and are actually decentralising in certain areas. The Education Division has allocated funds to schools to cover urgent minor repairs while funds are also being allocated for the purchase of utilities and materials directly by schools as from 1995. But decentralisation is bound to be a gradual process that will take into consideration the underlying culture of dependence that has its roots in the past.

The identification of areas for decentralisation is an ongoing process. Recruitment and deployment of staff, curricula and syllabuses, examinations, monitoring and evaluation, the auditing of standards, provision and sharing of resources, spaces and facilities, funds and services, construction and maintenance are some areas of concern in the decentralisation debate. A detailed plan of action will have to be worked out and implemented taking into consideration the training and empowerment of personnel who will be expected to assume new responsibilities.

School councils have been given significant space and power by law and are meant to be agents of decentralisation. Parents elect their representatives,

teachers elect theirs while students over 16 years of age are also represented. The head of school acts as both secretary and treasurer to the council. The president of the council of a primary school is nominated by the local (town) council while the president of a secondary school is nominated by the Minister of Education and Human Resources.

The school council is accountable to the Minister of Education. It is the duty of the council to be aware of the services offered by the school and what amenities are available to deliver these services. The council administers the funds and assets of the school according to established financial regulations but with an increased and increasing autonomy.

It may discuss the curriculum and the educational services offered by the school, as long as it does not interfere in individual student or teacher cases, or in matters of classification of students or other matters that fall under the discipline or teaching of the school academic staff or school administration. It can, however, make suggestions to the Education Division regarding changes or additions to the curriculum.

Together with the head of school, the council can study ways and means of increasing parent participation and contribution by organising educational, cultural and social activities for parents. The council may involve parents in helping the school. Every parent or teacher is entitled to submit suggestions or complaints to the council. The president and the secretary/treasurer decide which of these fall within the competence of the council and which within that of the school administration. The council may discuss the improvement of relations between teachers and parents.

The council is expected to foster good relations with the local council and other local or national organisations, excluding political ones, with the aim of helping the council with its activities and those of the school. The council can help local cultural organisations by lending or renting to them the school for any of their activities which the council considers to be culturally enriching to the people of the locality. The council may establish contacts with local enterprises so that these may contribute towards education and vocational training.

The council is expected to improve the physical, cultural, aesthetic, and moral aspects of the school and of the surrounding environment, and to discuss and monitor any environmental problems encountered by students. It can also discuss any transport or departmental problems related to students and make its suggestions accordingly.

The school councils, however, have not yet achieved the wide ranging aims set by the legislator and the administrator. Inevitably, certain school councils

seem more competent, enterprising and enthusiastic than others. At the same time, what appears to be a genuine desire by the central administration to encourage devolutionary approaches through school councils is often tempered by a sense of caution against hasty or unilateral decisions. Often, an insignificant issue or decision in a small island state can easily assume national proportions and can be politically damaging.

Given the size of the island, decentralisation may have its limitations. It may be uneconomical, especially because of economies of scale, to decentralise teacher recruitment and deployment, and major maintenance and refurbishment works. At crucial stages of a student's education, namely at 11+, 16+ and 18/19+, it is recommendable to have national examinations or similar measures of assessment to ensure an audit of quality and comparability. Schools should have more freedom in the implementation of the national curricula and syllabuses but a national core component has to be assured. Schools may indeed become the poorer if the existing central support system, facilities and services were to be withdrawn.

Therefore, decentralisation remains a major challenge in Malta too. Local councils have only recently been established and one has to follow the role they may eventually play in the management of education as part of the decentralisation process in other areas and on a national scale. So far, schools have been wary of the possibility of interference by external agencies but there are already some encouraging examples of fruitful collaboration.

7. Examinations and certification

Examinations and certification have always been given excessive importance within the Maltese system of education and have often controlled the content and process of the different stages of a student's educational development. The 11+ examination which determines whether pupils are admitted into a junior lyceum or a secondary school creates pressures on the educational and instructional content of the primary cycle. Most pupils in the primary schools concentrate on the acquisition of knowledge required to obtain good results in this examination. On the other hand, many pupils who join a secondary school are in danger of considering themselves as inferior to their colleagues in the junior lyceums and, as a result, students can develop a negative attitude to school.

The 16+ Ordinary Level examinations constitute another crucial benchmark. A student can take either the foreign General Certificate of Education Examinations, Ordinary Level, set by British universities, or the local Secondary Education Certificate Examinations, set by the University of Malta, which satisfy the local National Minimum Curriculum and satisfy local needs and aspi-

rations better. The local examination consists of a common core Paper I and either a more demanding Paper IIA or an easier Paper IIB in order to cater for both the higher and lower attainer in the particular subject, reflecting broadly the two-tier provision for 11-16-year-olds. However, the same student may sit for a Paper IIA in one subject and a Paper IIB in another subject. This fairly recent experience has made greater demands on early guidance and it is acknowledged that the examination may eventually undergo changes in the light of the feedback and evaluation over the next few years.

Advanced Level examinations set by British universities and by the University of Malta are available to 18+ students. Both examinations have so far been awarding a grade in individual subjects. As from May 1996, the Maltese Matriculation Certificate Examination will be offered in a wide range of subjects classified under a number of subject groups which are structured in such a way as to ensure that all candidates choose a mix of subjects from both the humanities and the science areas. Students will be able to specialise in one area or another, but without totally neglecting any of the basic fields of knowledge. The traditional three Advanced Levels will be replaced by two Advanced Levels and the third Advanced Level will be obtained through three subjects at Intermediate Level, ensuring both balance and spread. All students will also be required to sit for an examination in systems of knowledge, in itself a cross-curricular educational process. The overall grade will be based on the performance of the candidate in the examinations in the five subjects taken and in systems of knowledge. The reform will take these examinations away from the traditional British model towards the baccalaureate model adapted to local needs.

At 18+, students who have followed a technical or technological course in a technical institute or at the Centre for Electronics or similar educational institutions normally sit for the City and Guilds of London Institute examinations or for local examinations. Those students who would have opted for a vocational course at the age of 16, sit for an examination either originating locally or abroad, usually British institutions. Courses with a vocational bias, such as banking and accountancy, are becoming very popular.

Recently, more importance is being given to the aural/oral aspects of examinations in foreign languages in order to stress the communicative element of learning languages. This has had a beneficial backwash/spin-off effect on the way languages are being taught and learnt at school.

8. Schools as community centres

In the last twenty years, since the raising of the school leaving age from 14 to 16 in 1974, and the sharp increase in the number and variety of courses available at the post-16 level, most secondary schools have become small and the

educational facilities offered can benefit from an expansion of range and an improvement of quality. Some secondary schools had been planned as primary schools twenty or thirty years earlier. Spaces that had been earmarked for special teaching purposes had to be turned into classrooms in most secondary schools. Buildings that had been erected for other purposes and that are being used as schools must be replanned to really turn them into truly educational establishments. Recently a major redecorating and refurbishing exercise has been carried out to improve the physical environment for learning and education. At the same time, a number of new schools are being planned for the immediate and near future.

It is now acknowledged that schools must not only serve pupils and students but also the community at large. The concept of schools as community centres and centres for lifelong education so that they do not simply serve full-time students during the day but also adult students in the evenings is gradually gaining ground. The local councils may make use of certain school facilities for educational, community, and sporting activities. Evening classes in a very wide range of subjects and levels, not strictly academic, have been given in many schools in different areas of the island. Some schools may have to be restructured and refurbished to attract activities organised for adults as part of a developing programme for lifelong education, an initiative of primary importance for the state and society.

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Each book has been written by an expert from the country concerned on the basis of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was drawn up by Denis Kallen who has both co-ordinated the series and undertaken the editing of each text in collaboration with the author.
Given that this is an area in which changes take place particularly quickly and that the translation, revision and publication of the manuscript require a certain amount of time, there will be an opportunity to publish updated information for the Final Conference of the project in 1996.

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